

Camp & Dive: 18 Spectacular Weekend Adventures

Rodale's

The Magazine Divers Trust

NOV./DEC. 1996 (DISPLAY UNTIL DEC. 31)

SCUBA DIVING

SPECIAL ISSUE

Ultimate Family Getaways!

13 Best Destinations
41 Dollar-Saving Deals
10 Top Snorkel Beaches

Survival
Guide To
Dive Travel
Perfect-Fit
Dive Gear

Cure Cuts and Stings!

Complete Belize
Guidebook, pg. 38

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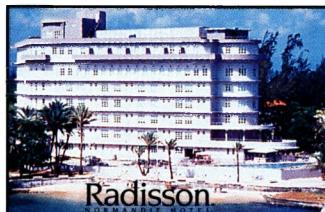
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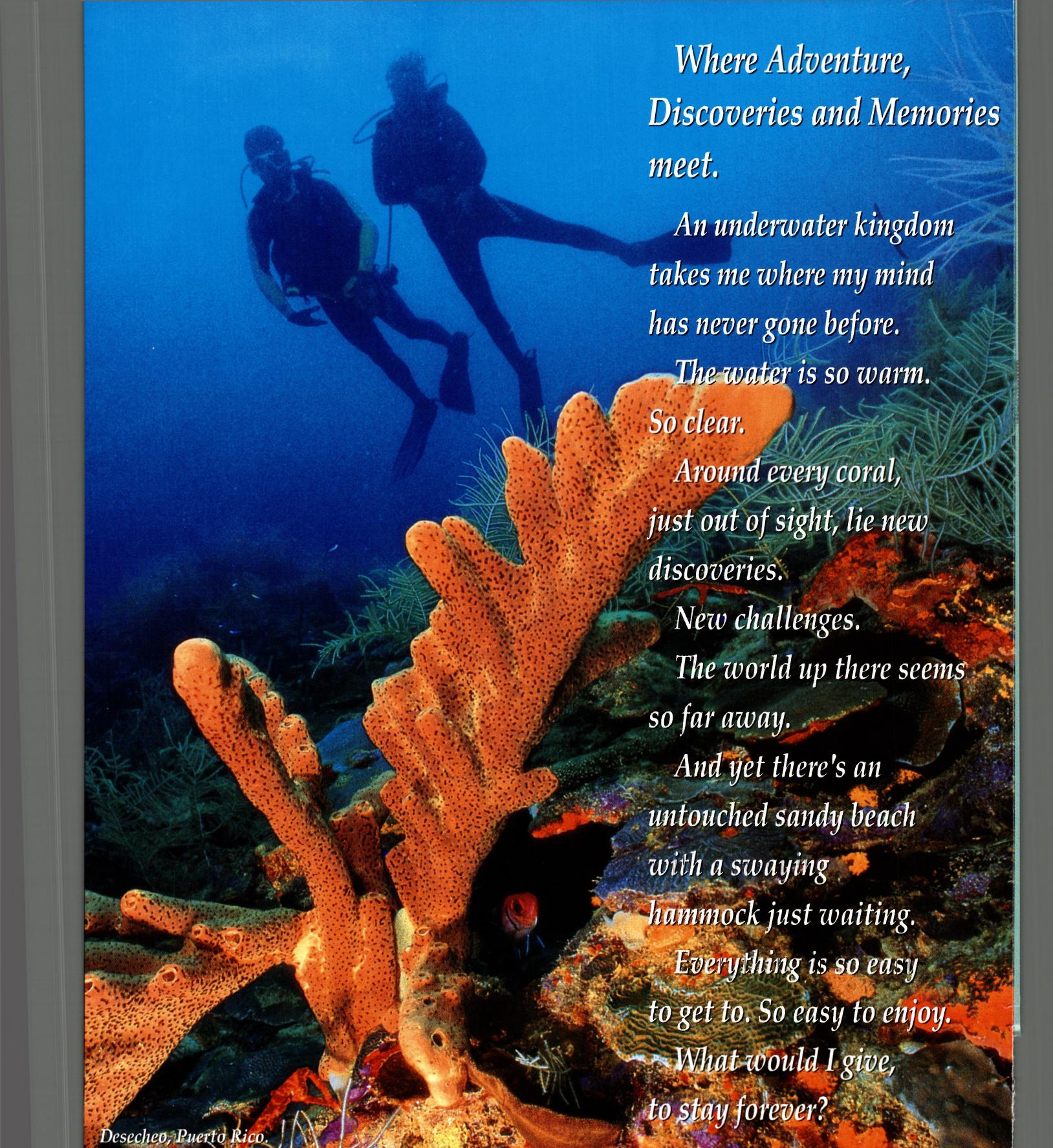


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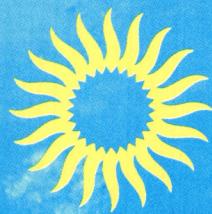
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BEHIND THE LINES

Divers 'R' Us

By David Taylor

ROBERT GERHEART

It was an historic Fall '96. The highest number of students enrolled in our nation's schools since—guess when?—the baby boomer years. Kids of aging boomers, the largest single population blip in America's history, are now a second lump moving through the python's belly. And like their parents before them, these kids' swelling demographics ensure that their needs, desires and habits will affect nearly every aspect of our lives. Including diving.

It's no secret that scuba diving has changed radically since its black rubber, macho beginnings. The speargun as symbol of our sport has been replaced by the tropical dive bootie, with lime green accents. Behind the equipment, the faces on dive boats are changing, too—fewer whiskers, fewer years, smoother curves. Indeed, nearly 60 percent of RSD readers are married or have been; 40 percent are currently rearing children.

More importantly for our sport, diving parents are turning scuba into a family activity, and the number of junior certifications is booming. PADI, the nation's largest training agency, has averaged a 13 percent increase in junior certifications each year since 1994. YMCA, the nation's oldest, estimates 15 percent of all its certifications currently go to junior divers.

The big numbers are one good reason why this issue is devoted to the first-ever "Guide to Family Diving." But here's another: the Steinbooks of Bethlehem, Pa. Barbara is a typical boomer—an active, 40-something, professional, single mom raising two boys. And she'd been anticipating this summer since being certified in 1992: Her sons Matthew, 15, and Benjamin, 12, both became old enough for C-cards. Finally she would be able to share one of the most important things in her life with those she loved most.

As she wrote in her letter to me: "I enrolled the boys with Dave Bender at The Scuba Tank, where I received my certification. We treated the course like a



Barbara Steinbook of Bethlehem, Pa., with her newly certified sons—Matthew, 15, and Benjamin, 12. "We treated the certification course as a family activity," she writes.

family activity, reading the units aloud and quizzing each other. I joined the boys in the classroom and the pool, and watched them steadily gain confidence in their skills and develop respect for the serious business of diving.

"My confidence in their training got its biggest boost in Grand Cayman, where we scheduled their open water dives. Matthew and Ben were both unfazed by a close encounter with a school of tarpon on their first dive. A stiffer test for them—and for my nerves—came at Stingray City on our first day diving together. In the swirl of hungry rays, a yellowtail snapper lunged for the fistful of squid in Benjamin's hand. Suddenly his regulator was dangling at his side. He nonchalantly replaced it, showing me the tiny nip on his finger before swimming off to observe a nurse shark our divemaster had coaxed from under a ledge.

"By our final day, any doubts that the future would bring more family diving adventures evaporated when I overheard the boys comparing notes on dive sites with a cluster of seasoned divers awaiting the morning boats. That's when I knew I could start dreaming of our next trip."

To help the Steinbooks and other families fulfill those dreams is the second, more important reason for this special issue filled with vacation packages, gear tips and instruction—all devoted to today's diving families.

Rodale's SCUBA DIVING

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A large, artistic photograph of a family of four (two adults and two children) wearing scuba gear and diving masks, swimming in clear blue ocean water. The image is slightly blurred to create a sense of motion.

Rodale's

SCUBA DIVING

The Magazine Divers Trust

Volume 5, number 9, issue 41

Guide to Family Diving



Travel

29 CAMP 'N' DIVE From tents to tanks, starfish to shooting stars, pioneer spirit meets dive computer in this guide to the best places to roast marshmallows and blow bubbles. ~By John Francis

38 RSD TRAVEL GUIDE: BELIZE Maybe they were thinking of Belize when they said good things come in small packages. This Massachusetts-sized country has everything a diver craves—and then some. ~By Buck Butler

59 READER RATINGS: AUSTRALIA AND HONDURAS'S BAY ISLANDS Our readers have been there, dived that. Here's their report on the best islands, operators and live-aboards.

17 WEEKENDERS You'll get two of these one-tank getaways in your own backyard, according to where you live:

- **Northeast:** Ponquogue Bridge, N.Y.; Magnolia Rocks, Mass.
- **South:** Emerald Lagoon, Fla.; New River, Va.
- **Midwest/South Central:** Pearl Lake, Ill.; Freeport, Texas
- **West:** Bamfield, British Columbia; Laguna Beach, Calif.

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ULTIMATE FAMILY GETAWAYS Grab your regs and your rug rats. Here's the first complete family dive travel planner: Best destinations, resorts and escape routes for your annual dive pilgrimage. ~By Nick Lucey

SURVIVAL GUIDE TO DIVE TRAVEL If the Swiss Family Robinson had this guide to vacation travel, they would've ended up sipping piña coladas instead of collecting coconuts.

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PERFECT-FIT DIVE GEAR From the diapered to the dentured, our review of family dive gear shows you how to find fit, comfort and safety for everyone you love. ~By Jon Hardy

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TEACH YOUR KIDS TO SNORKEL The best preschool for future divers may be your own mom-and-pop operation. ~By Jennifer King



On the Cover: Jesse Simonsen, five years old, snorkels Caneel Bay in St. John, USVI. Photo by his dad, Steve Simonsen. Diving courtesy Low Key Watersports.

Rodale's

SCUBA DIVING

The Magazine Divers Trust

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DIVE WATCHES More than a fashion statement, less than a necessity, these 13 dive watches will stand the test of time—and depth.

~By John Francis

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SECRETS OF PERFECT TOPSIDE PHOTOS After you and your camera have dripped dry, here are 16 tips to make your topside photos postcard-perfect. ~By Franklin Viola

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CURE CUTS AND STINGS Don't go diving without these prescriptions for accidental close encounters with the marine world's most armed and dangerous denizens. ~By Samuel Shelanski, M.D.

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LETTERS

The Galapagos Crucible

I am writing in regard to Bucky McMahon's article about the exploitation occurring in the Galapagos Islands ("Galapagone?" Aug. '96). While I certainly agree that destruction of such a unique and treasured natural environment is a tragedy, the hypocrisy and arrogance that your writer and the rest of us from the U.S. and other "developed" nations display is equally horrendous. What right do we have to look down our noses at the people of Ecuador—and other nations for that matter—and criticize them for not taking care of their marine resources when we are having the same difficulties?

Granted, the richness and diversity of the Galapagos are far better known than those off the coast of Maine, but as your article about the sea urchin fishery points out ("Seaview: Urchin Boom Gone Bust?" Aug. '96), we can't even prevent our own citizens from overexploiting our natural resources. If the legislature in the

state of Maine won't take action as long as large catches are still being landed, what makes us think we can convince the government and people of Ecuador to act differently? As the old saying goes, people in glass houses should not throw stones.

JOHN SENGER
NEWPORT News, VA.

While reading your August issue I was shocked, startled and sickened by the "Galapagone?" article. I was aware that conditions in the Galapagos Islands were not perfect but I, like many other readers, was totally unaware that conditions are as bad as they seem to be. I immediately took action by printing up sheets to petition with. I was glad to see that you gave readers the addresses of places to write. If divers take action and gather signatures along with me, we might get something accomplished. I sincerely hope there are others like me who will work together to keep the most beautiful islands on Earth safe. If there is anyone who wishes to join me in fighting these atrocities, please contact me at Box 64, Bradford Woods, PA 15015.

MATT COLLINS

Editor's note: Thanks for stepping up to

the plate, Matt. Readers may also join RSD's international mail and fax campaign to save the Galapagos Islands. See "Behind the Lines" in September '96 for a suggested action letter and three key addresses. The letter can also be downloaded from our web site (<http://www.scubadiving.com>) or our America Online area (keyword: RSD).

Breathing Easy

I recently got my certification as an open-water diver but my biggest problem was consumption of air. I used to feel bad about going diving with my friends because I always was the one to give the signal that I was running out of air. They wouldn't complain, but I know that I ruined most of their dives by running out of air and having to go up. When I first read your article on saving air ("Secrets of Saving Air," July '96), I felt like it was written just for me. I started practicing the 16 techniques with my buddy. On our next group dive, for the first time, I was not the one to give the signal for running out of air.

OSVALDO SANTIAGO
BAYAMON, PUERTO RICO

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THE NATURAL CHOICE.

Rodale's *Scuba Diving* (the Aug. '96 issue) in the airport. While I fully intended to read it on the plane and leave it there for the next bored traveler, I found that I couldn't. *RSD* gives an almost unique balance between product reviews, instructional articles, travel advice and articles of general interest.

As my fiancée and I are both relatively new to the sport, we especially appreciated your Weekender section. While the reviews of more exotic locales, such as Micronesia, are certainly tempting, it's great to learn about local dives where we can practice our skills and just get wet again. We were wondering if you publish an anthology of your Weekenders?

KENT A. SUTHERLAND
GLASTONBURY, CONN.

Editor's note: We like your suggestion for publishing an anthology of Weekenders, Kent. Look for it soon. In the meantime, you can access a number of past Weekenders at our web site: <http://www.scubadiving.com/> or our America Online area (keyword: RSD).

Sorry, Wrong Number

Last night I received a phone call from

an individual claiming to be an employee of your magazine and informing me of the chance to extend my subscription to another scuba magazine. I informed him that I did not subscribe to that magazine, but that I did subscribe to *RSD*. He then asked if I wanted to extend my subscription to *RSD*. I said no, not at this time, and especially not over the phone. Approximately one hour later I received another call from someone who wanted to confirm that I did indeed wish to extend my *RSD* subscription as I had indicated during the previous conversation. I again clearly stated no thanks.

I enjoy reading *RSD* and want to keep it coming. But I do not care to endure late night phone calls trying to hustle extended subscriptions from me. Please desist.

CHRIS LAFFERTY
LEXINGTON, KY.

Editor's note: This is an example of unscrupulous business practices by a subscription sales agent not authorized by *RSD*. If you receive a similar call, please note the company's name and agent's phone number, then contact us directly. The only way we can stop this from occasionally happening is by

nailing these suckers.

Corrections

We incorrectly reported that Bruce Mate was a professor at the University of Oregon and scientist with the Whale Conservation Institute in Wes Skiles' story on his encounter with sperm whales and pseudorca ("Grand Illusion," June '96). Dr. Mate is a professor at Oregon State University and was a visiting scientist onboard the Whale Conservation Institute's vessel *Odyssey*.

We also incorrectly reported two accommodations and diving packages in our Travel Desk story "The Quick and the Cheap" (Aug. '96). The correct price for seven nights at the Hotel Barracuda in Cozumel, five 2-tank dives and four 1-tank dives is \$382, plus airfare. The correct number of nights included in the \$399 package at Club Cozumel Caribe is three nights.

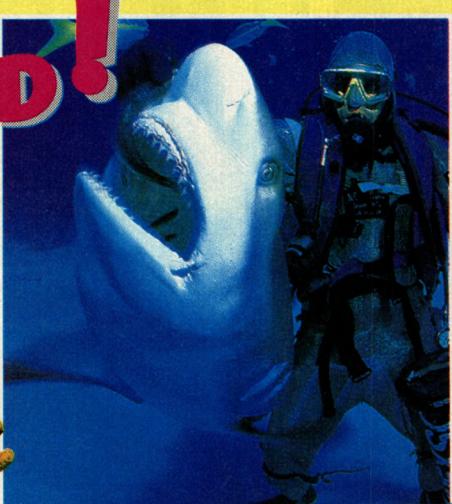
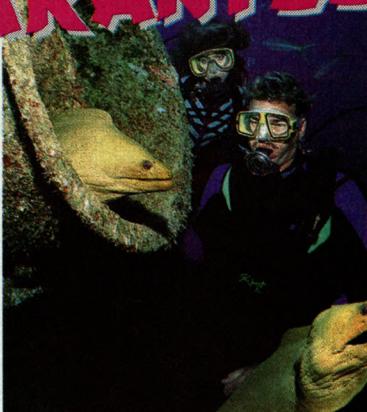
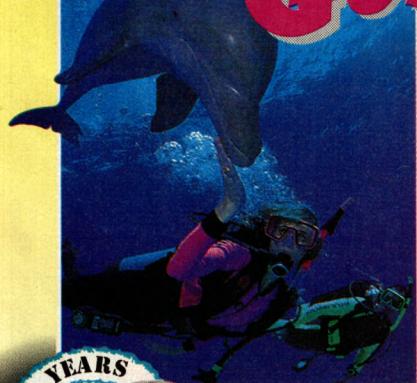
In the September issue, we overlooked Landfall Productions Dive and Adventure Travel (800-525-3833, 510-794-1599), the U.S. booking office for the live-aboard *Lammer Law*. A 10-night package to the Galapagos starts at \$2,900.

RSD regrets the errors.



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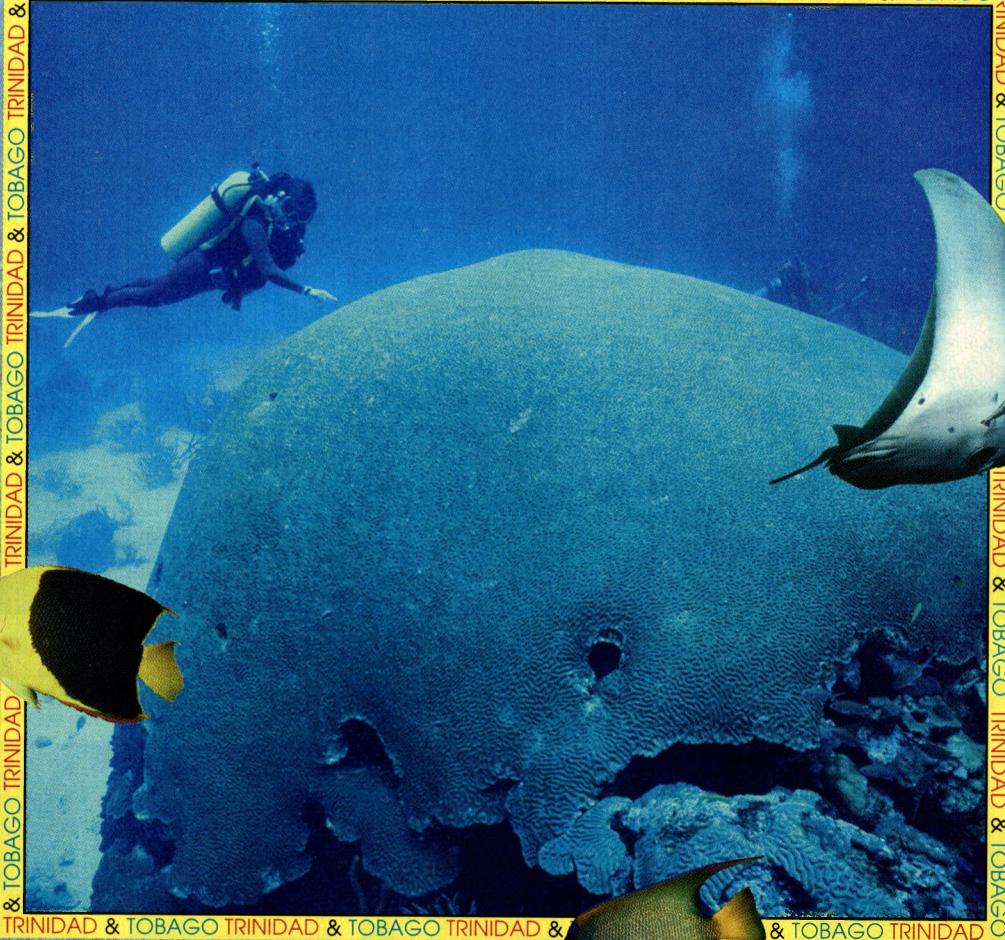


Photo: Douglas Spranger

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TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

COME TO LIFE

Cozumel eco-update

A Marine Park Shy of Paradise

The announcement left everyone stunned. In the middle of a bruising fight over the cruise ship pier at Paradise Reef (see "Seaview: Protesting for Paradise," RSD, May '96), the Mexican federal government created a new marine park to protect the island's major diving reefs.

The National Institute for Ecology (NIE) created the park in July, replacing the unenforced Marine Refuge Zone that did little to protect dive sites in the first place. The government also hired a respected biologist as park director and appointed a local board of trustees to oversee operations. The new park's boundaries, which conveniently leave out Paradise Reef, start just south of the pier and wrap around the southern tip of the island.

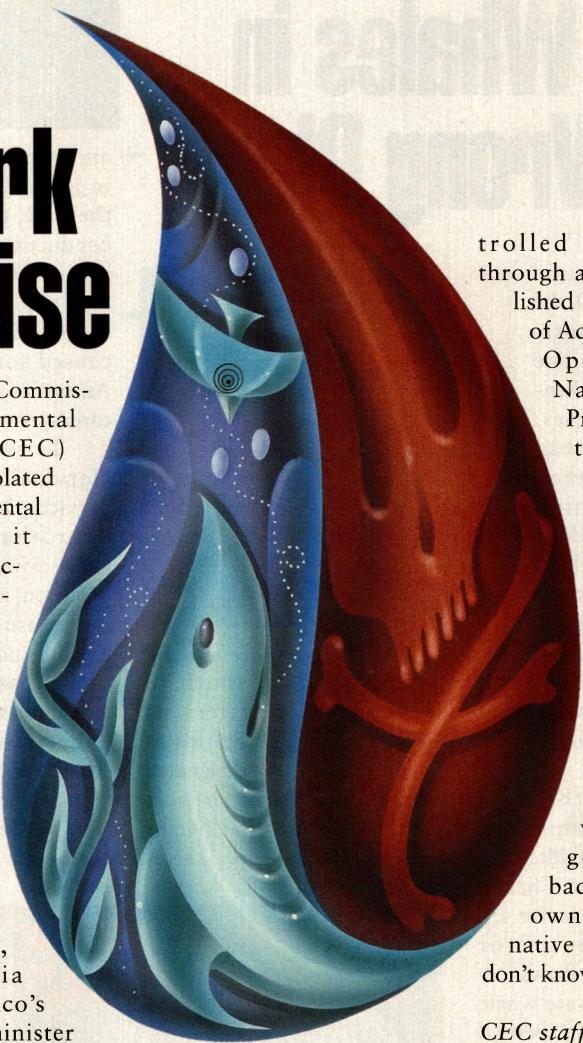
Bill Horn, a dive shop owner and outspoken pier opponent, said he was surprised by the announcement and had no insight into the government's motives.

"Guilt?" he speculated.

Environmental groups have hammered the NIE for allowing a new cruise ship pier to be built over Paradise Reef, a productive shallow reef and popular dive site. Their complaint to the

NAFTA-created Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) claims Mexico violated its own environmental laws when it approved construction. The complaint is the first in history to be accepted by the commission, despite arguments by Mexico that the permit was valid and that the CEC had no jurisdiction in the matter. In August, however, Julia Carabrias, Mexico's environmental minister and head of the NIE when the pier was approved, joined her U.S. and Canadian counterparts in a 3-0 vote to have CEC staffers prepare a report on the issue—a move that could lead to international criticism of the Mexican government.

"If I give the government the benefit of the doubt, I would say that all the ruckus opened their eyes to the value of the reefs of Cozumel and the desire of people to protect it," says Alex Stone, president of Miami-based Reefkeeper



trolled entity, in part through a trust fund established by the Association of Aquatic and Tourism Operators and the Natural Resources Protection Committee to fund park activities.

But until a management plan is finalized, worries about access to reefs, additional fees and what protection the park will ultimately offer have some island residents wary. "It could be good, it could be bad," says dive shop owner Juan Leca, a native of the island. "We don't know yet."

International. The conservation group is offering suggestions on park management, training volunteers and conducting reef surveys in Cozumel so officials have data to use in managing the park.

Guilt, an awakening environmental consciousness, or maybe just a public relations ploy to blunt future criticism—whatever the reason, Cozumel dive operators are focused on establishing the marine park as a viable, locally con-

CEC staffers are in the process of preparing a "factual record" of the pier case and their report should go to the three environmental ministers sometime this winter. Upon receiving the report, the three ministers can convene a special meeting or take up the matter at their June 1997 meeting.

For more information on the CEC and the Paradise Reef complaint (Submission ID: SEM-96-001), see the CEC's home page on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.cec.org>.

whale deaths

Right Whales in The Wrong Place

With a population of about 300, the North Atlantic right whale is the world's most endangered whale species. Despite a hunting ban enacted in 1935, their numbers have continued to decrease, and the discovery of six dead animals within a two-and-a-half-month period early this year—more than triple the annual mortality rate—has raised new questions about the survival of the species.

"I consider the right whale situation one of the greatest crises in wildlife conservation," says Dr. Charles "Stormy" Mayo, a senior scientist at the Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown, Mass., a private whale rescue organization. "Behind these numbers may lurk an unknown 200 percent or more deaths. Due to the predominantly westerly winds carrying bodies away from shore, we're not seeing all the animals that are dying."

Slow-moving plankton feeders, right whales spend most of their time at or near the surface, making them vulnerable to ship strikes as they migrate through busy East Coast shipping lanes. The whales migrate north to the Bay of Fundy each summer and then move back to Cape Cod in the fall and winter. Pregnant females make the



hazardous trek south to warmer coastal waters off Georgia and north Florida to give birth in an area designated as a right whale critical habitat.

It was there that five of the dead whales—three calves

and two adults—were found in January and February. At the time, the U.S. Navy was conducting war games in the area, raising the possibility that exploding ordnance or collisions with naval vessels caused some of the deaths. Autopsies of the deteriorated carcasses were inconclusive.

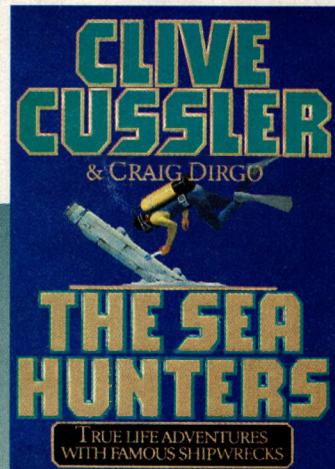
To avert collisions, the National Marine Fisheries Service plans to improve its right whale monitoring to locate whale pods with better precision, and then communicate those locations to commercial and military vessels.

Just as important to protecting the species is the need to understand how declining coastal ecosystems affect the faltering right whale population. "We've seen a drop in reproductive activity over the last few

years," says Dr. Scott Kraus, of the New England Aquarium. "Whether this is due to the cumulative effect of man-made toxins, reduction in available food sources or a reduced gene pool, we don't know. But I feel we've got only about five to 10 years to find answers."

—LANCE LEONHARDT

For more information on right whales, contact the Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown, Mass., at (508) 487-3622 and the North American Right Whale Program at the New England Aquarium in Boston at (617) 973-6582.



ARMCHAIR DIVING SEA HUNTER TELLS ALL

Dirk Pitt, eat your heart out.

Clive Cussler, the prolific author of 13 successful adventure novels starring Pitt as nautical adventurer, has upstaged his fictional character with his own true-life tales.

Like Pitt, Cussler likes the challenge of solving a mystery and the excitement of a diving adventure. That's why he founded the National Underwater Marine Agency (NUMA) 20 years ago. The nonprofit foundation has been responsible for discovering 60 historic shipwrecks, documenting them and turning them over to the states where they were found.

After finishing his recent best-seller *Shockwave*, Cussler sat down to write his first nonfiction book, *The Sea Hunters: True*

Life Adventures With Famous Shipwrecks, telling the stories of 17 of NUMA's most intriguing finds. Among those singled out for their history, mystery, or the sheer difficulty of finding them are the Lexington, USS Cumberland and the author's favorite find—the Confederate submarine, H.L. Hunley (see "Seaview: Novelist Finds Confederate Sub," RSD, Aug. '95). Each chapter begins with a creative dramatization of the history of the ship and its demise, then shifts

to first-person accounts of the search and discovery.

What's next for the intrepid explorer who finances his expeditions with royalties from his novels? "The Pioneer II, predecessor to the Hunley, would be fun to find or maybe the Invincible, a Texas warship sunk off Galveston in 1863 in the Texas War of Independence against Mexico," says Cussler. But the find of the century for Cussler would be John Paul Jones' flagship, the *Bonhomme Richard*, the target of NUMA's first search in 1978 that has yet to be found.

—ELLSWORTH BOYD

Live Chat

RSD offers you the chance to chat live with author/adventurer Clive Cussler on America Online. The best-selling author of *Raise the Titanic*, *Inca Gold* and *Shockwave* will answer your questions in an exclusive AOL chat Nov. 14 at 10 p.m. EST. Just log on to AOL and go to keyword: RSD.

reef, laws and videotape

Psssst!!! Hey, diver. Wanna buy the video the U.S. Government didn't want you to see?

No, not the alien autopsy. We're talking about *The Fragile Ring of Life*. It's a 54-minute documentary on the health of the world's reefs. Until now, you couldn't get it in the United States, but the folks at Oceanwatch will sell you one, no questions asked.

Truth be told, there's nothing scandalous or seditious about *Fragile Ring*. Filmed in 1994 by noted underwater cinematographer Nick Caloyianis, the film examines reefs through the lives of people who depend on

them for survival—from Sri Lanka to the Florida Keys. Because it was made with U.S. Information Agency funding, the video was banned from domestic distribution under a 1948 law designed to thwart internal political propaganda.

Oceanwatch, a Virginia-based conservation group, began lobbying Congress in 1995 to exempt the video ("There's nothing very political about coral reefs," points out Oceanwatch President Cliff McCreedy), which was produced as the U.S. contribution to the International



Coral Reef Initiative.

This summer, Congress passed the exemption and it was signed into law. To celebrate, Oceanwatch is arranging release parties and selling copies of the video. "It's possibly the most enlightening program ever made on coral reefs," says McCreedy. "The video is already being disseminated everywhere except

in the United States. It's ironic that it took an act of Congress for Americans to see this powerful documentary."

For more information on *The Fragile Ring of Life*, write to: Oceanwatch, P.O. Box 1618, Vienna, VA 22183-1618. Phone: (703) 827-2591. E-mail: Oceanwatch@aol.com.

AYMAN TAHER

marine biology

Royal Shrimp

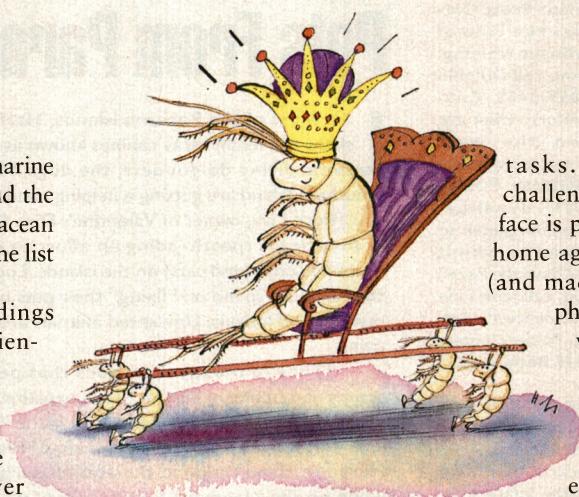
King crab and queen triggerfish are just fancy names. If you want real underwater royalty, look to the snapping shrimp of Belize, where a queen shrimp rules the nest with hundreds of workers serving her.

Like ants and honeybees, the tiny orange shrimp have evolved a highly defined social system that biologists call "eusociality"—the most complex form of social organization among animals. Based on the findings of J. Emmett Duffy, a marine biologist with the College of William and Mary's School of Marine Science, *Synalpheus regalis* are

the first marine animal and the first crustacean to make the list of eusocial animals.

While Duffy's findings are a breakthrough, scientists expect to find similar behavior in other forms of marine life. "Most coral reefs are probably brimming over with undescribed species, and even for the ones that have been named, we often know next to nothing about how they live," Duffy said. "It wouldn't be terribly surprising to find eusociality in some of them."

Snapping shrimp are less than a half-inch long and spend their lives inside enormous sponges. Duffy studied



the colonies off Carrie Bow Caye, Belize, where sponges can house 300 or more shrimp. Several generations are there at any given time, including the queen—who does all the reproducing—her young, and workers of different ages.

The shrimp exhibit cooperative care of the young and work in teams to perform

tasks. The biggest challenge the shrimp face is protecting their home against invaders (and macro photographers) in an area where nearly all the sponges are occupied.

The workers, male and female, defend their home sponge fiercely, taking on their opponents with their oversized front claws. During the fight, the older workers appear protective of juveniles, and after some battles, worker shrimp team up to carry away the dead.

Duffy's research was reported in the journal *Nature*. —KAREN SCHWARTZ

HAL MAYORTHY

BULLETINS

Sept. 5-Dec. 15 ► STINGRAY PHOTO ROUNDUP, sponsored by Sea & Sea and Parrots Landing on Grand Cayman. Divers using Sea & Sea cameras and diving with Parrots Landing compete to produce the best photos of the famous Stingray City dive site. Two winners will receive a Cayman vacation and Sea & Sea photo gear. For more information, call (800) 448-0428.

Nov. 8-10 ► NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR CAVE DIVING workshops at Santa Fe Community College in Gainesville, Fla. Workshops will feature speakers from cave diving expeditions in Florida, Mexico and Japan. For more information, call Lloyd Bailey at (352) 332-0738.

Nov. 9-16 ► PROJECT DIVE SAFETY SEMINAR on the live-aboard Nekton Pilot, sponsored by Divers Alert Network. DAN will be monitoring diver profiles and conducting Doppler microbubble tests during a week-long cruise through the southern Bahamas. For more information, contact Nekton Diving Cruises at (800) 899-6753 or DAN Research at (919) 684-2948, ext. 260.

Nov. 13-17 ► NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK SCUBA DIVERS annual summit, will be held at the Princess Beach Hotel and Casino in Curaçao. For information and registration, call (800) 626-3319.

Nov. 15-17 ► SHARING INNERSPACE, the 1996 YMCA National Scuba Convention, will be held in Huntsville, Ala., in conjunction with the U.S. Space and Rocket Center Space Camp. Guest speakers, including astronaut/aquonaut Scott Carpenter, will discuss the role of scuba diving in astronaut training. For more information, call Dolphin Aquatics at (205) 859-3483. Convention forms and information are also available on the web: www.hsv.tis.net/~dai/ymcaconv.htm.

Dec. 31 ► INTERNATIONAL POSTER CONTEST FOR YOUTH deadline. Schoolchildren from kindergarten to high school are invited to submit posters on the theme "Save the Reef." For more information, call John Fine at (718) 375-3997. For contest rules, send an SASE to: Intl. Poster Contest for Youth, Suite 2C, 117 Beekman St., New York, NY 10038.

Dec. 31 ► BENEATH THE SEA PHOTO AND VIDEO CONTEST entry deadline. Divers compete for the David Doubilet Award for Photo Excellence and the Stan Waterman Award for Video Excellence. Prizes include one-week Aggressor Fleet live-aboard vacations to the Bay Islands and Galapagos Islands. For rules and entry forms, send an SASE to: BTS Photo Contest, 70 Washington Blvd., Mt. Vernon, NY 10550.

If there's an event you would like included in Bulletins, send all relevant information at least three months in advance to: Bulletins, Rodale's Scuba Diving, 6600 Abercorn St., Suite 208, Savannah, GA 31405. Or e-mail us at RSDmgzn@aol.com.

food for thought

Dwindling Goosefish

Would you eat this fish?

"The goosefish is the ugliest fish in the ocean. It got its name by sneaking up on geese and other waterfowl and gobbling them up with its big mouth," says veteran diver Joe Dorsey. "They have horns, spike-like spines and razor-sharp teeth. A diver who spears one will never spear another. It's like grabbing a tiger by the tail. The goosefish is a diver's nightmare."

But a diner's delight. Despite its gruesome appearance, millions of people in the Northeast are munching on its tasty tail meat, while Asians are devouring its liver.

Once despised as a trash fish, the goosefish—aka monkfish, anglerfish or all-mouth—is now a hot commodity. Livers

can grow more than a foot long and sell for \$9 a pound. The fat organs are stripped out, carefully packed into small plastic containers, then air-freighted to the Orient. The delectable tail meat—described as a cross between lobster, snow crab and Alaskan king crab—is marketed domestically in seafood outlets and restaurants.

With that kind of demand, the voracious predator has become voraciously preyed upon, prompting regulators to draft new monkfish regulations that should go into effect in early 1997. "The species is

BIG MOUTH STRIKES AGAIN: DUE TO THE DEMAND FROM THE NORTHEAST AND ASIA, GOOSEFISH POPULATIONS ARE PLUMMETTING.

threatened," says Terry Frady of the National Marine Fisheries Service. "To make matters worse, there's a new market class called 'pee wee tails.'

"The explosion has to be controlled," agrees fisherman Kevin Wark of Barnegat Light, N.J. "The monkfish fishery has rapidly expanded and faces depletion unless something is done soon."

—ELLSWORTH BOYD

ELLSWORTH BOYD

diving do-gooders

Pets From Paradise

Like most of the Bahama islands, Harbour Island has its share of friendly stray canines known as potcakes. But thanks to some diving do-gooders, the dogs here and on neighboring Eleuthera Island are getting a helping hand.

Rose Liva, owner of Valentine's Dive Center, is one of several Americans spearheading an effort to curb the explosion in homeless dogs (and cats) on the islands. Local Bahamians have little money to spend on "fixing" their pets or caring for unplanned puppies and kittens. Unwanted animals are left to forage on their own.

"They're mostly muttskies that people feed their table scraps and hunks of lard to," Liva explains. The lard takes on the shape of the cooking pot, hence the name "potcakes."

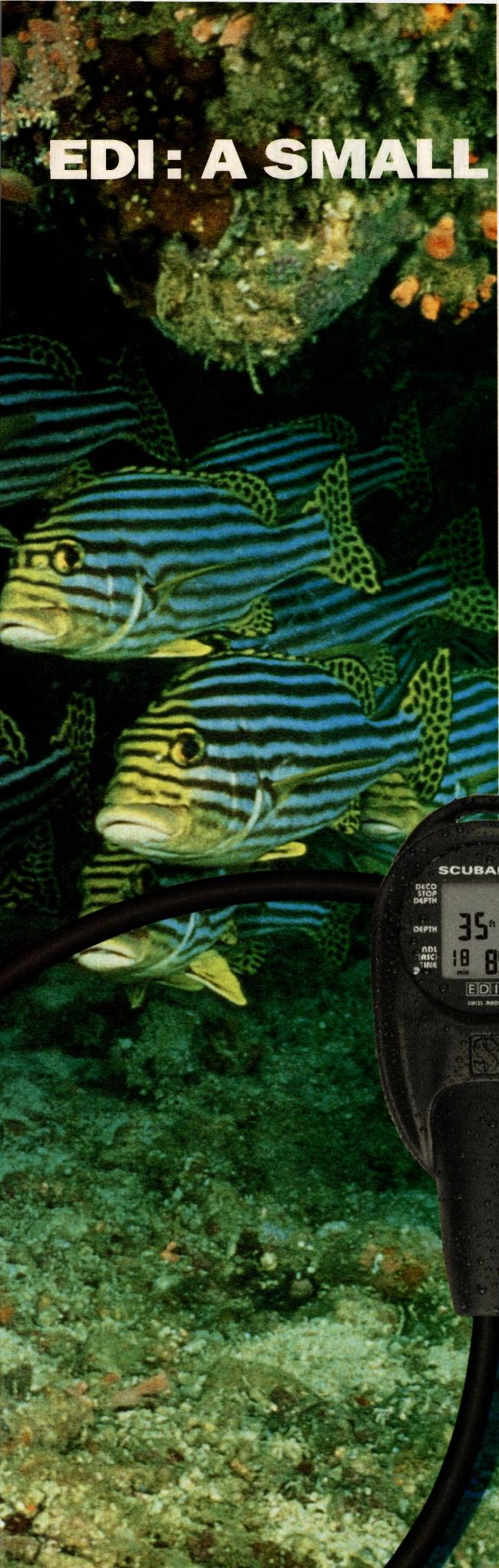
Veterinarian Dominick Munafo of Rhode Island, a part-time Harbour Island resident, donates his surgical skills and supplies when on the island and Liva's team of volunteers donate their labor. "We hit the roads in golf carts, nets in hand and carriers and cages in the back, and catch everything that moves," Liva explains. Animals are spayed or neutered and given veterinary care.

The volunteers also arrange for visiting tourists to adopt homeless dogs. In most cases, says Liva, they can deliver an animal to the U.S. with all the necessary paperwork and shots free of charge. Already, guests from as far away as Atlanta, Washington, D.C., and Colorado have adopted Harbour Island potcakes. —DAVIS D. JANOWSKI

For more information on pet adoptions, call Valentine's Dive Center at (809) 333-2309.



DAVIS JANOWSKI



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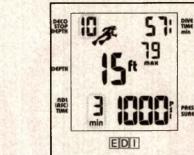
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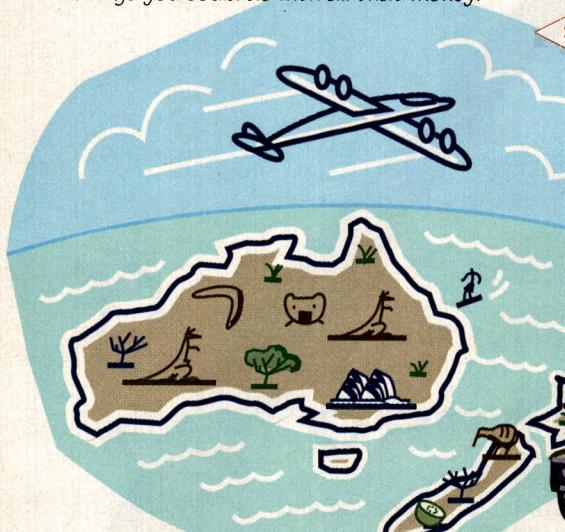
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Pearl Lake, Ill.

When it's back-to-school time, Midwestern divers head for Pearl Lake's 35-acre campus.

BY STEVE HARRINGTON

If you're a diver in the Midwest, chances are good that you've been to Pearl Lake. Maybe you fell in love with scuba here during your open water class, or earned a specialty certification in the lake. Or maybe you just went for a summer afternoon dip beneath the emerald-green water and were dazzled by the complexity of the freshwater environment.

This 35-acre lake near the Wisconsin-Illinois border has been a recreational resort for more than 30 years, and its convenient location to major cities in both states—60 miles from Chicago and Milwaukee, 40 miles from Madison, Wis., and 15 miles from Rockford, Ill.—makes it one of the Midwest's most popular training sites. As many as 75 dive stores and clubs throughout the region use the lake to teach diving, and an untold number of divers have earned their C-cards here, from open water all the way up to instructor.

A former sand and gravel quarry, Pearl Lake gradually slopes to a maximum depth of 85 feet. New divers ease comfortably through the transition from pool sessions to open water by following the slope down to training platforms at 20 to 30 feet.

Certified divers are free to explore the lake's man-made attractions, most found at 40 feet. There is a Diamond Reef buoyancy course, as well as cabin cruisers, a twin-engine airplane, a school bus, a 35-foot miniature submarine (yellow, of course) and the lake's newest attraction—a 40-foot Great Lakes trawler that's open for penetration. Each site is marked by a surface buoy and can be reached from shore.

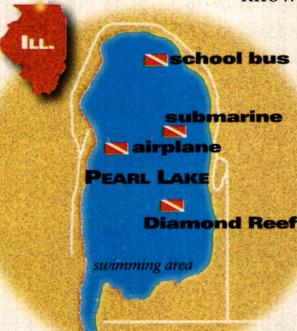
These man-made objects are coated with a thin layer of algae and usually swarmed by fish. Hidden inside wrecks are largemouth and smallmouth bass—while bottom-feeding

white suckers probe the sandy bottom. Underwater photographers seek out the lake's walleye, perch and bluegill, and may even find themselves face-to-face with a 30-pound catfish.

Often overlooked are weed beds in nearshore shallows. It is here in 15 feet of water that cautious divers will discover a vibrant nursery of juvenile fish, crayfish and aquatic insects. Turtles, snails and three types of freshwater clams can also be found in these shallow zones where predatory walleye cruise for dinner. A half hour of quiet observation on one of these weed patches can yield a lifetime of knowledge and appreciation for the diversity of freshwater ecosystems.

Capitalizing on these attractions, Pearl Lake Resort has expanded the lake's training role with a series of specialty courses. Underwater naturalist, underwater photography and archaeological research diving workshops are taught each summer by regional experts, including Keith Pamper of the Shedd Aquarium and David Cooper, Wisconsin state underwater archaeologist. ©

Steve Harrington is the author of Diver's Guide to Wisconsin.

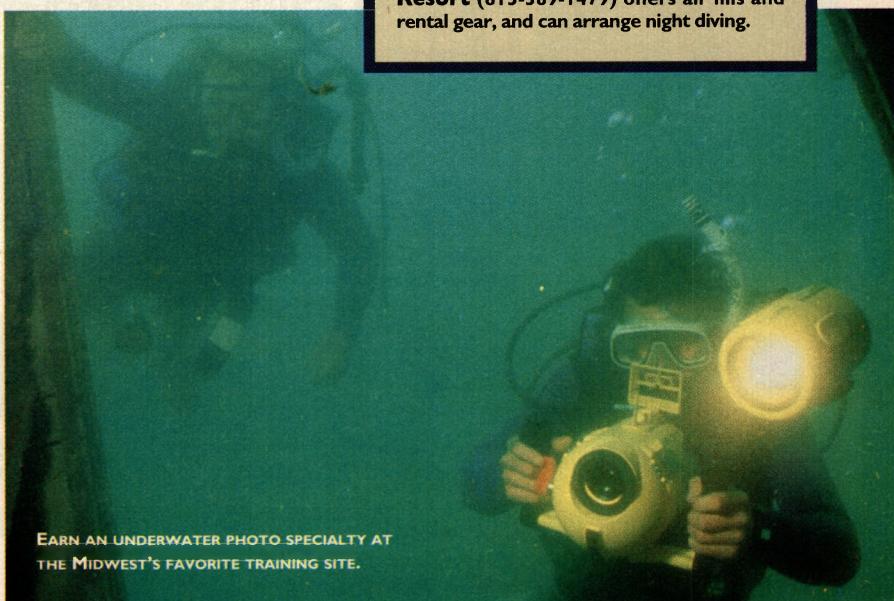


DIVE IN

Pearl Lake is located just south of the Wisconsin state line in South Beloit, Ill., off Hwy. 251. The lake is open from early April through late October from 8 a.m. to dusk. The resort features swimming beaches with changing facilities, campgrounds, a dive center and full-service restaurant. Admission to Pearl Lake is \$10 per day for divers (\$5 for nondivers). Camping fees are extra. Motel lodging is available in South Beloit and in nearby Beloit, Wis. Power boating is not allowed on Pearl Lake.

Visibility ranges from 15 to 40 feet and summer water temperatures average 75°F on the surface and 60°F at depth. Pearl Lake Resort (815-389-1479) offers air fills and rental gear, and can arrange night diving.

NICK LUCEY



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CONTEST RULES:

1. Open to amateur photographers only.
2. You may enter as many photographs as you wish.
3. Shots can be taken in any location where snorkeling is done, above or below water, but must contain at least one snorkeler.
4. Winners will be notified by March 31, 1997.



HOW TO ENTER:

You must submit prints or slides. All entries must be labeled with your full name, address, telephone number, location where the photo was taken, the equipment and film used to take the photo. Photographs cannot be returned.

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DEADLINE FOR ENTRY:

All entries must be postmarked by March 3, 1997.

Sponsors include American Airlines/American Eagle, the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, U.S. Divers, and the resorts of the Bahama Out Islands. Round trip air travel for two persons on American Airlines/American Eagle from anywhere in the continental United States, accommodations, and snorkeling excursions are included. The decision of the judges is final. The prize must be used in 1997; some blackout dates may apply. Employees of the Bahama Out Islands Promotion Board, the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, U.S. Divers, American Airlines/American Eagle, Bahamas Out Island resorts and their families are not eligible. The odds of winning depend on the number of entries received. The contest is subject to all federal, state, local, and provincial laws and regulations and is void where prohibited.

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Freeport, Texas

**Rising from the flames of a deadly accident,
the Freeport Liberty Ship Reef Complex celebrates new life.**

BY JESSE CANCELMO

The Freeport Liberty Ship Reef Complex is a story of tragedy and trash turned into treasure. This wide-ranging collection of shipwrecks and man-made reefs provides a sheltered habitat for fish and marine life in an area of the Gulf of Mexico that naturally affords no protection at all.

Where once there was only barren sand, the park's attractions are now encased by a living skin of soft corals. Among the twisted refuse of industry and disaster, schools of grunts seek shelter while predatory amberjack seek prey. It's an active oasis of marine life that began with a deadly accident.

The tanker V.A. *Fogg* left Freeport, Texas, bound for Galveston on Feb. 5, 1972. Some 36 miles offshore, vapors in the ship's empty benzene tanks ignited and the explosion sent a mushroom cloud billowing two miles into the sky. The bow of the ship ripped open and the *Fogg* sailed to the 100-foot bottom in less than five minutes. All 39 crewmen died.

It didn't take long for encrusting sponges, hydroids and urchins to overrun the vessel or for schools of crimson bigeye and silvery grunts to take refuge in the wreckage.

In the decades that followed, Texans added two liberty ships, several decommissioned oil rigs, a welded pipe structure and a coal ash pyramid to form a 160-acre park on the sandy bottom. While the *Fogg* remains the focal point of the reef park, the newer man-made entries are notable for their creativity.

In the summer of 1993, Houston Light and Power deployed its unique pyramid reef adjacent to the *Fogg*. The ash from coal-fired power plants was mixed with concrete and packed into dense, four-foot blocks. More than 300 of these blocks were used to build

an 18-foot-high underwater pyramid that's now covered with a living mat of algae, barnacles, soft corals and encrusting sponges. The pyramid provides a hideaway for more than 50 species of fish that include Atlantic spadefish, cobia, gray triggerfish and amberjack.

A jungle gym of recycled welded pipe and cable slings, donated by Conoco and Galveston County, lies just southeast of the *Fogg*'s bow. The 40-foot-high structure is designed as a "predator cage"—not to protect humans, but as a haven for fish.

A 441-foot-long decommissioned World War II supply ship, the *William F. Allen*, was deliberately sunk within swimming distance north of the V.A.

Fogg's bow section. For safety, the superstructure

and all hatch covers were removed before sinking. Star Reef is part of the second section of the artificial reef complex. It lies 1,000 feet north of the *Fogg*. This "iron reef" consists of six recycled oil and gas platforms configured on the bottom in the shape of a star. A second liberty ship, the *B.F. Shaw*, lies 250 feet north of Star Reef. Some divers believe the identities of the *Allen* and *Shaw* have been reversed and that the *Shaw* actually is the one lying next to the *Fogg*. ☐

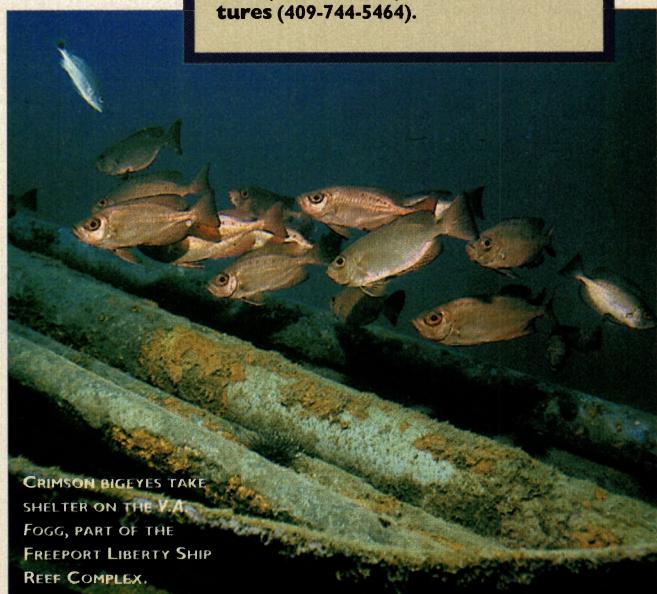


Jesse Cancelmo is a freelance underwater photographer who lives in Houston, Texas.

DIVE IN

Because of warmer water temps, July, August and September are the best months for diving the Freeport Liberty Ship Reef Complex, though the best vis occurs in October. The surface water temperature reaches the low to mid-80Fs and the variable visibility can be as good as 60 feet. Average vis, however, is more like 25 feet or less. Expect a thermocline at depth and a layer of muddy water close to the bottom. Currents can change quickly, making the site better suited to intermediate and advanced divers.

Because of unpredictable conditions, some operators schedule *Fogg* trips with a contingency plan to dive either Stetson Bank or an offshore rig. Information and dive charters from Freeport are available from Ultra Dive (713-469-2846), Aquaventure Charters (713-489-0797) and Reel Adventures (409-744-5464).



CRIMSON BIGEYES TAKE SHELTER ON THE V.A. FOGG, PART OF THE FREEPORT LIBERTY SHIP REEF COMPLEX.

NICK LUCEY

JESSE CANCELMO



Come down and see me sometime.

Remember all the excitement of diving? Consider this your invitation to rediscover it. Come this spring, we have spectacular plans to make diving more exciting than ever. To clue yourself in, stop by your nearest dive store. Or visit our website at <http://www.dema.com> or call 1-800-TM2-DIVE.

Then you can tell your dive buddies (and non-diving friends) you heard it straight from the Goby's mouth.



In Mike Nelson's day, a dive watch was important equipment. Before air pressure gauges, the rotating bezel on the big dial gave him an idea of how much air he had left, and helped him keep track of bottom time so he could work the dive tables. When he was a little narced, it helped him time decompression stops.

Just as important back then, when almost all scuba divers were men, a massive dive watch told the topside world, "I'm a manly scuba diver who spends most of his day battling monsters of the deep and stuff, but I'm taking time out just to be with you."

Automatic bottom timers, followed by dive computers, have replaced most of the dive watch's bread-and-butter functions. So have dive watches gone the way of the horse-collar BC and double-hose regulator? Don't believe



Dive Watches

**The best underwater timepieces—
hands down. BY JOHN FRANCIS**

it for a quartz second. Instead, the traditional analog dive watch has become more complicated, more waterproof, more imposing, more expensive—and more desired.

It's easy to poke fun, but when you hold one in your hand you begin to sense another reason for the old-fashioned dive watch's appeal: they are beautiful pieces of machinery. The delicacy and precision with which their dials are inscribed and their cases carved provoke something like wonder. So does the intricate nest of springs and cogs spinning on tiny rubies and sapphires that lie behind the complex multiple functions of the mechanical movements. Watchmakers have always been the aristocrats among craftsmen, and these timepieces are the pinnacle of watchmaking.

And, to be fair, there are still important uses for a watch under water. Besides providing a redundant timer—something you shouldn't dive without—a watch also allows you to clock your decompression/safety stops and bottom time to the second. You can also use a dive watch, along with a compass, to navigate. (For example, swimming one minute at 270° takes you back to the boat.)

Some practical information—there are three types of movements: digital, quartz and mechanical. The first uses a computer chip. The second uses a highly accurate quartz oscillator, which regulates a motor that drives a set of gears. Both require a battery. A mechanical movement is a spring-driven set of gears. Expensive ones are usually "automatic," or self-winding.

Digital movements are the blue-collar workers of the watch world. At a low price, they get the job done and more: The computer chips produce more functions than you can remember how to use—but can you push the buttons while wearing dive gloves? Is this a new reason for a pointy dive knife?

Those chips also make possible a new kind of dive watch that is halfway to a

① TAG Heuer 6000 Series

STAINLESS STEEL CASE IN MEN'S AND UNISEX SIZES. QUARTZ MOVEMENT HAS LOW-BATTERY INDICATOR: WHEN THE SECOND HAND JUMPS FOUR SECONDS, REPLACE THE BATTERY. OTHER MODELS IN THE SERIES HAVE AUTOMATIC MOVEMENTS, GOLD CASES. WATER-RESISTANT TO 660 FEET. \$1,850.

② Rolex Oyster Submariner

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③ Seiko Scubamaster S23287

DIGITAL MOVEMENT MONITORS TIME AND DEPTHS (TO THE SECOND AND FOOT) AND COMPARES TO NAVY DIVE TABLES TO GIVE MAXIMUM BOTTOM TIME, MINIMUM SURFACE INTERVAL AND "DON'T FLY" PERIOD. WITH DECOMPRESSION ALARM AND FAST-ASCENT ALARM, DATA STORAGE FOR 30 DIVES. YES, TELLS TIME AND DATE, TOO. WATER-RESISTANT TO 660 FEET. \$1,000.

④ Citizen Hyper Aqualand

A DIVE LOG ON YOUR WRIST: ENTER NAME, DATE, DIVE BUDDY, NOTES, ETC. DIGITAL MOVEMENT DISPLAYS (BESIDES TYPICAL WATCH FUNCTIONS) BOTTOM TIME, SURFACE INTERVAL, DEPTH, AIR OR WATER TEMPERATURE. LOG INFO FOR DOWNLOADING TO YOUR PC. FAST-ASCENT ALARM. WATER-RESISTANT TO 660 FEET. \$495 (PC INTERFACE KIT EXTRA).

dive computer. The Seiko Scubamaster and Citizen Hyper Aqualand are examples. With some dive computers already having watch functions, look for the two instruments to merge into one in the near future.

Although digital and quartz movements are more accurate and possibly more reliable, the traditional mechanical movements are the most expensive and most likely to achieve collector status. They are also repairable, while digital chips and quartz movements are not. (Digital and quartz movements can be replaced, but in 20 years your specific movement may no longer be available.) A screw-down crown (i.e., the winding stem) and a decompression valve make the watch more watertight.

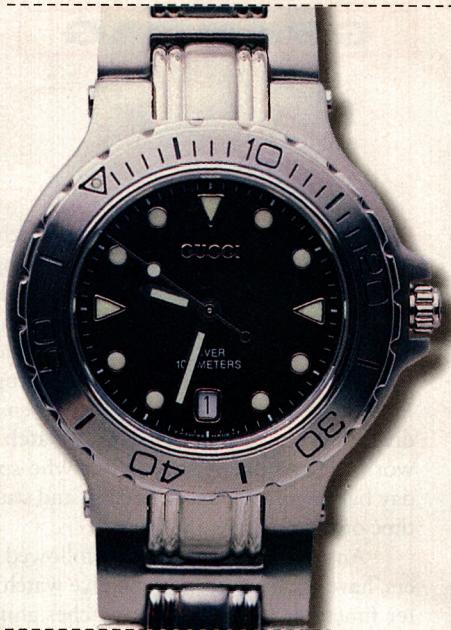
Speaking of that, you'll notice that no watch claims to be *waterproof*, only *water-resistant*. Sounds suspicious, but

the price tag on some of these baubles.

All analog watches shown here have screw-down crowns, one-way rotating bezels, luminous hands and hour markers unless noted otherwise. Prices are suggested retail.

watch industry people insist this is only because of a quirk in the Federal Trade Commission's definition of "waterproof," which makes the standard practically impossible to meet. All manufacturers listed here will replace a leaky watch within their warranty periods, generally one to three years. Many companies will extend the warranty if you return the watch to them annually for maintenance. Keep in mind that the crown and push buttons penetrate the case, so watertightness depends on O-rings, which wear out.

Watertightness claims to 330 feet and more seem like overkill for most of us, but a big margin of safety is probably a good idea given



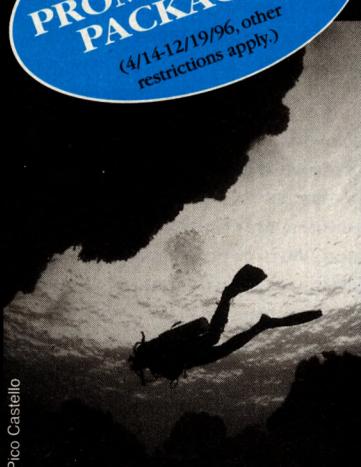
Gucci Model #9755

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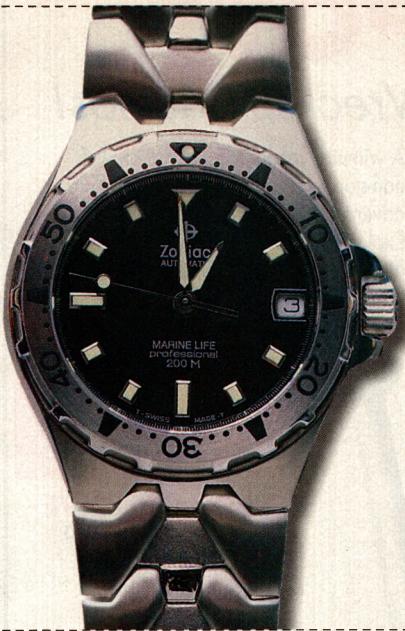
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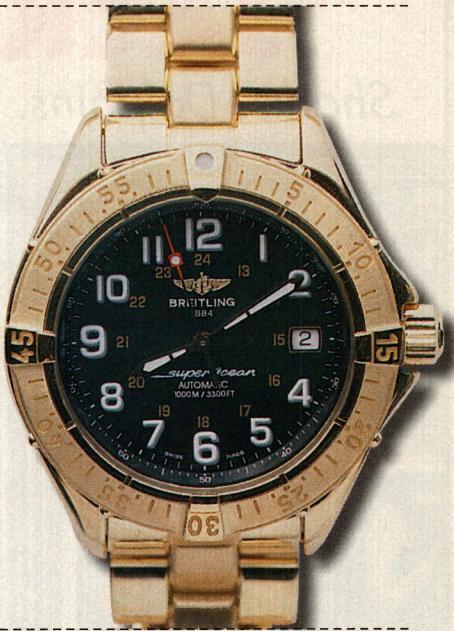
Bulova Marine Star #98B82

COBALT BLUE, STAINLESS STEEL CASE WITH SCREW-IN BACK, QUARTZ MOVEMENT, WATER-RESISTANT TO 330 FEET. FOLD-OVER BUCKLE HAS SAFETY LOCK. \$350.



Zodiac Marine Life

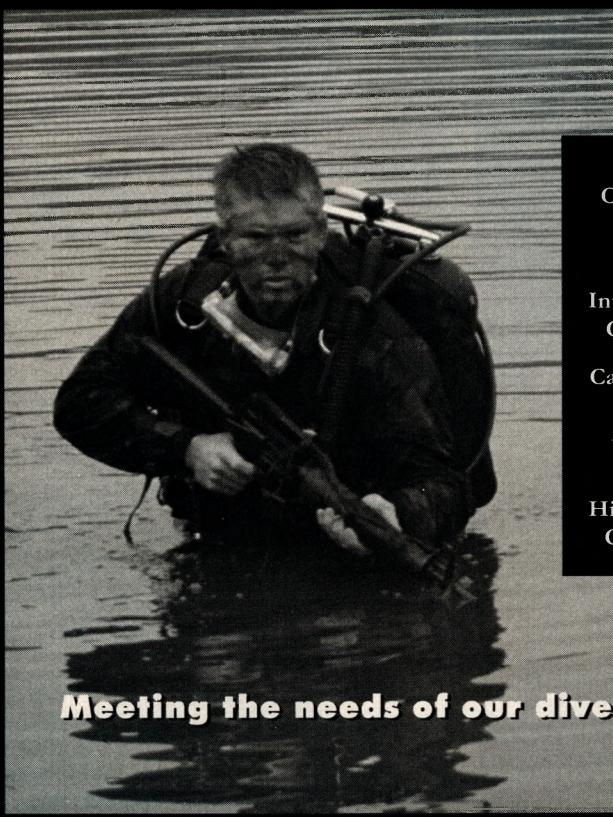
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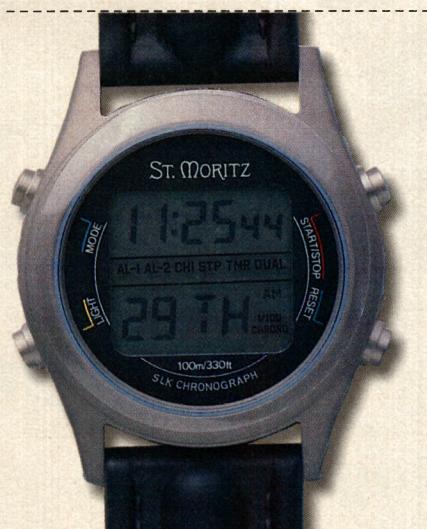
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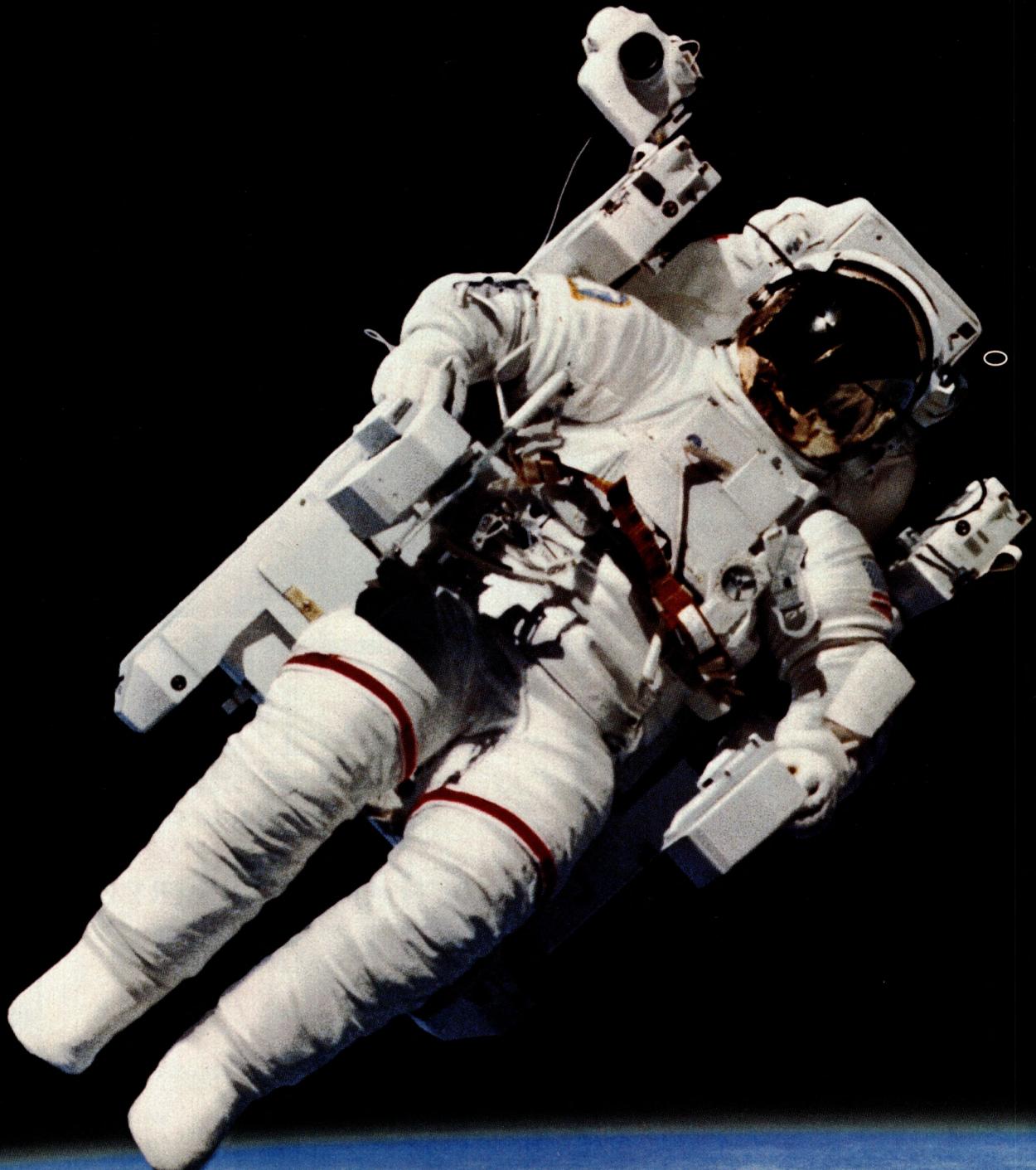
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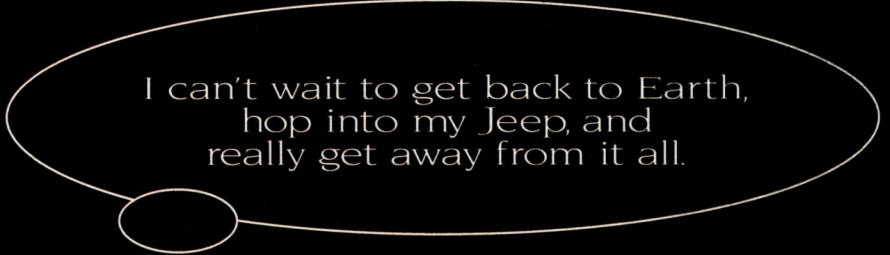
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CIRCLE NO. 24 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Rodale's
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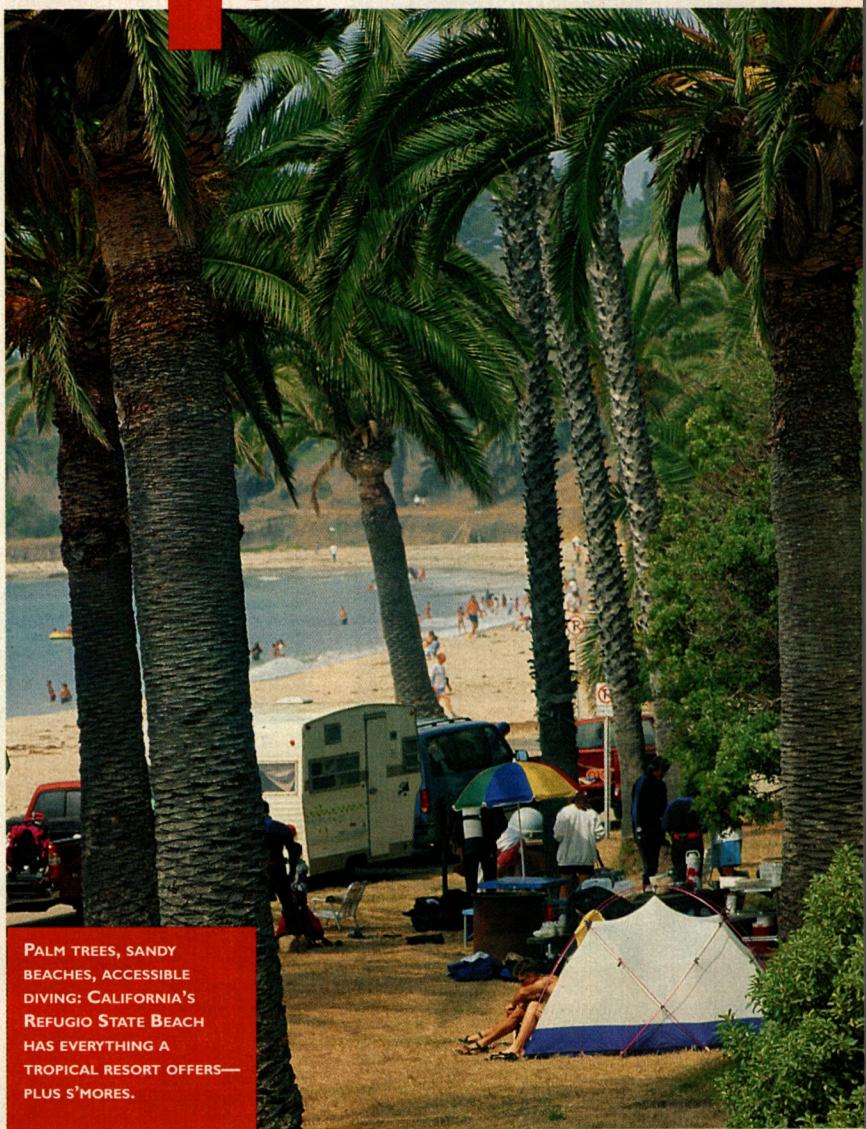
Camp 'n' Dive

From tents to tanks, starfish to shooting stars, pioneer spirit meets dive computer in this guide to the best places to toast marshmallows and blow bubbles. BY JOHN FRANCIS

As the driftwood campfire burns down to coals, you spread the contents of the day's game bag on the grill, settle down into your beach chair, crack a pop-top and watch the ocean collect the last light of sunset. Today, you dived the rocky point to the right; tomorrow, maybe it'll be the kelp bed just inside it. Whatever. With no crowds, no boat schedules and no divemasters, it's entirely your choice. Although reason tells you that other divers have been here before, it's easy to indulge the fantasy that this sweet spot is your discovery.

For many divers, a sense of adventure is the primary appeal of shore diving. It promises escape from the packaged, the planned and the predictable, a getaway from the crowd, the chance to explore. Combine shore diving with a camping trip and you've got the traditional, almost inevitable, family vacation. The kids chase squirrels, bounce off boulders, fall out of trees and generally drive their parents crazy. But find a supervised campground on diveable water, and mom and dad can vacation in a different world—for 45 minutes, at least.

Both faces of the camping/diving trip share an important feature: both are relatively cheap. So if your MasterCard balance has almost as many digits as your account number and the dive resort brochures are clearly talking to someone else, take heart: there's still



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JONATHAN BIRD/ORG

hope for a vacation next year. Forget airline tickets and hotel reservations, pack up the family minivan and hark to the call of the open road: "Daddy, I have to go to the bathroom." A few destinations:

The Northeast

In the upper right-hand corner of the United States, and reachable by ferry from Eastport, Maine, is Deer Island. On the northern edge of the Bay of Fundy, Deer Island is famous for its extreme tides, which average 28 feet. The constant wash of cold, nutrient-rich water has created a bottom rich in sponges, stars, anemones, tunicates and other invertebrates, as well as a variety of crabs and fish. Scallop season runs January through April. Best of all, the color-

ful show is accessible from the DEER ISLAND POINT CAMPGROUND (506-747-2423) near the ferry landing. Nearly 80 campsites are on or near the water, but several nearest the point are favored by divers; you can gear up at your campsite and walk right in. Per night, in 1996: \$13.91 for sites with electricity, \$11.77 for tent sites. Beware of strong currents. The largest tidal whirlpool in North America, locally called Old Sow, is nearby and has swallowed ships, let alone



MICHELE WARREN



divers. Study the tide tables and dive at slack water only. There are other shore dives on Deer Island and several places sell air and diving equipment. For nondiving family members, the campground conducts hiking tours and rents bicycles. Two nearby dive shops are DEMPSEY'S DIVE SUPPLY & SERVICE (506-747-0183) and SPARKY TOO (506-747-2398). East Coast Ferries (506-747-2159) runs a ferry between Eastport and Deer Island from July until September only, but a government-run ferry out of L'Etete runs year-round.

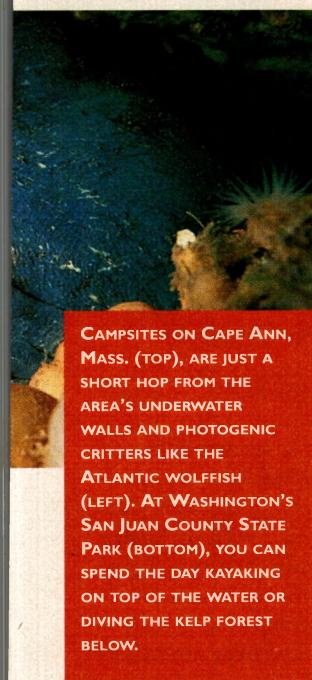
About 250 miles down the coast is another island, or near-island, Cape Ann, Mass. The island's granite substrate makes an interesting underwater topography, with walls, ledges, overhangs and drop-offs hosting a thick population of southern kelp and invertebrates.

There are dozens of shore dive sites around the island, so no matter the wind direction, some will be on the lee side. Seven wrecks and an offshore pinnacle called Paddock Rock are reachable by small boat or via local charter. Lobster and crab will tempt you to fill your game bag, but

check out regulations first. They are complicated and rigidly enforced. CAPE ANN CAMP SITE, in Gloucester (508-283-8683), has about 250 campsites on the Annisquam River. From here, you can reach the various dive sites around the island in your inflatable or small boat. The shore dives are a short drive from camp. A beach is a short walk from the camp and Rockport, once an old seafaring port on the north end of the island, is now a quaint tourist destination. CAPE ANN DIVERS (508-281-8082) operates charter boats. It's located in Gloucester at 127 Eastern Ave.

The Northwest

The last frontier in undeveloped, unspoiled diving may be a lot closer than New Guinea. With very few dive resorts



CAMPITES ON CAPE ANN, MASS. (TOP), ARE JUST A SHORT HOP FROM THE AREA'S UNDERWATER WALLS AND PHOTOGENIC CRITTERS LIKE THE ATLANTIC WOLFFISH (LEFT). AT WASHINGTON'S SAN JUAN COUNTY STATE PARK (BOTTOM), YOU CAN SPEND THE DAY KAYAKING ON TOP OF THE WATER OR DIVING THE KELP FOREST BELOW.

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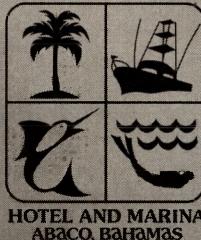
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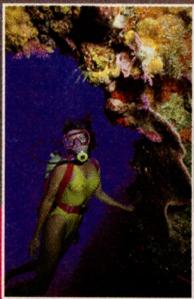


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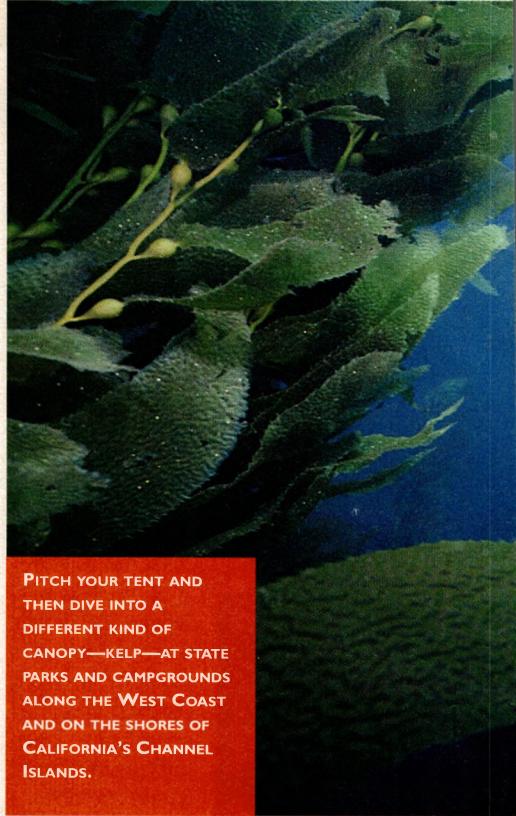


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PARKS AND CAMPGROUNDS
ALONG THE WEST COAST
AND ON THE SHORES OF
CALIFORNIA'S CHANNEL
ISLANDS.

in the Pacific Northwest, the best way to sample this haunting and challenging diving short of a live-aboard may be by driving and camping.

Close to shore, the Pacific is deep, cold and rich in plankton, supporting a remarkable variety of invertebrate life in vivid reds, yellows, blues and oranges. Moving up the food chain, the reefs and kelp forests are crowded with rockfish, sculpin, salmon, Pacific octopus, king crab, dolphin, sea lions, shark and killer whales, all in intense competition for life. Heavy surge and extreme tides can make for strong currents. We're not in Florida anymore, Toto.

Washington has built many state and county parks on the shores and islands of Puget Sound, some with campsites and others with picnic areas convenient for suiting up. A good base for exploring the area is SAN JUAN COUNTY PARK (360-378-2992) on San Juan Island, with campsites on the water and a launching ramp. Per night: \$15.

Four good dives are possible from the campground, all featuring submerged rocks and thick kelp harboring purple urchins, yellow cup corals, red and white anemones, rainbow nudibranchs, yellow sponges and red and blue stars. Deadman Bay, Eagle Cove and Lime Kiln Point are three more dive sites on San Juan Island; there are dozens more on the other islands of Puget Sound and the coast of the Olympic Peninsula. Diving these sites

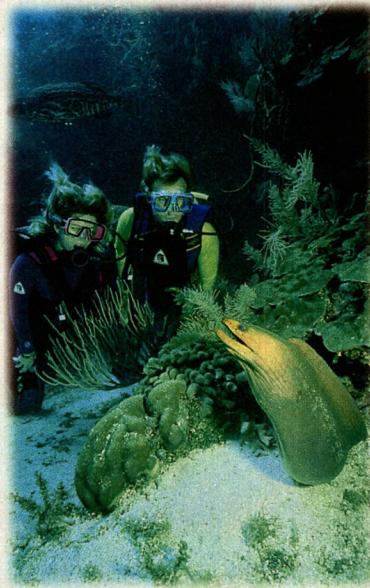
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MARTY SNYDERMAN

safely depends on the tides, however. A dive shop with local information is EMERALD SEAS DIVING CENTER, Spring Street Landing, Friday Harbor (360-378-2772). The dive shop specializes in half-day charters with dive guides.

The northern California coastline is unprotected from huge Pacific swells that break against hundreds of miles of sheer cliffs, making Highway One between Eureka and San Francisco a famous scenic drive. Here and there, breaks in the cliff wall allow coastal access to some remarkable diving. One of the few places you can both camp and dive is SALT POINT STATE PARK, about 70 miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge. Open April 1 through November 30 (some campsites are available year-round), the camp-ground has 139 campsites with table, grill and flush toilets, but no showers. Reservations are taken in the summer at (707) 847-3221. Per night: \$14 to \$16. Boats can be launched at Ocean Cove and Timber Cove.

Gerstle Cove here is an underwater reserve. The bottom between 50 and 80 feet is thick with nudibranchs, chitons, stars and anemones. Just outside the cove, a thick kelp bed harbors abalone, kelp bass and perch. Between here and Jenner, about 15 miles south, are at least six shore dives accessible from the highway, including Ocean Cove, Stillwater Cove and Cemetery Reef. The cold-water diving here requires advanced skills because

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Gingerbread Grounds

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Orange Cay

Conception Island

Rum Cay

NEKTON DIVING CRUISES



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of the dangerous surf and water temperature. The lifeguard service has a telephone number that accesses a recording of current ocean conditions (707-847-3222).

The Southeast

Looking for someplace more, well, tropical? There are waterfront campgrounds in Florida and the Keys, but in most cases the reefs are several miles offshore with nothing more interesting than shallow sand flats in between. Local dive shops

abound. Inland, however, Florida offers a unique camping and diving experience in its network of freshwater springs. The best known, and probably the most interesting for divers without cave certification, is GINNIE SPRINGS. One of two



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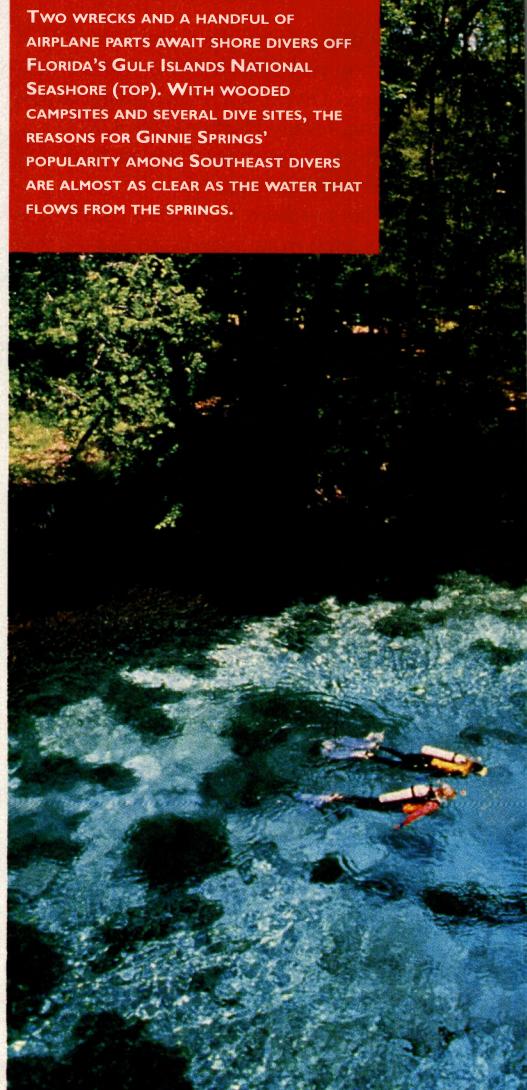
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CIRCLE NO. 19 ON READER SERVICE CARD

caverns can be penetrated to the 55-foot level where a grill blocks further passage. Turn around and look back at the entrance for a stunning sight. You don't know what unlimited vis is until you've dived a Florida spring. Another popular attraction is tubing or rafting the Santa Fe River. A 200-acre campground begins a few steps from the stairs into the spring. Per night: \$10/adult, \$4/children 7-14 years, and free for children six years old

TWO WRECKS AND A HANDFUL OF AIRPLANE PARTS AWAIT SHORE DIVERS OFF FLORIDA'S GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE (TOP). WITH WOODED CAMPSITES AND SEVERAL DIVE SITES, THE REASONS FOR GINNIE SPRINGS' POPULARITY AMONG SOUTHEAST DIVERS ARE ALMOST AS CLEAR AS THE WATER THAT FLOWS FROM THE SPRINGS.

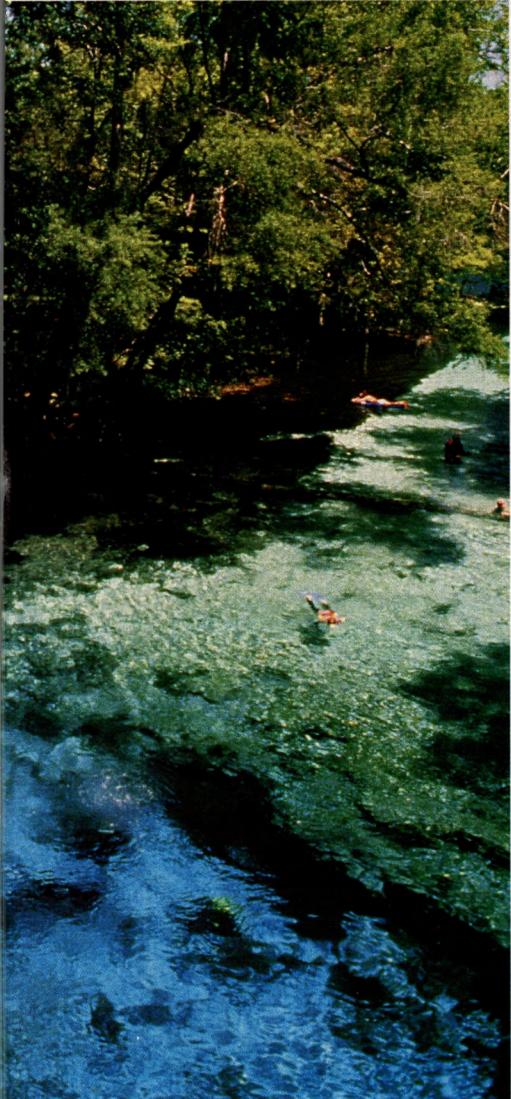


and younger. The full-service dive shop is on-site. Call (800) 874-8571 or (904) 454-2202.

Also try VORTEX SPRING (800-342-0640). Its bowl is 200 feet by 45 feet with 68F water, lots of fish (blue gill, bass, oceanic American shad, etc.), 17 campsites with tables and water. Per night: \$12.50 for two adults, \$3.50 per extra person, \$3.50 for electricity.

On the Gulf coast of Florida at the Alabama border is the **Gulf Islands National Seashore**. There's a campground at FORT PICKENS (904-934-2621), where diving the jetties reveals sunken caves, rubble, rocks and airplane parts to a max depth of 45 to 50 feet. The wreck of the *Catherine* is 150 yards off Battery Langdon, though shifting sand sometimes makes the wreck difficult to locate. The wreck of the *Whiskey* is a shore dive from the Ramada Inn in Gulf Shores, Ala. For local information, call GULF COAST DIVE PRO (904-456-8845). Camping at the national seashore is \$16 per night for

WES SKILES/SHOOTERWATER STOCK



campsites with electricity and \$12 without, plus a \$4 weekly entrance fee per vehicle.

Southern California

The California coast turns sharply eastward below Point Conception, and under its lee, Pacific swells subside, temperatures climb and vis improves. Halfway to Santa Barbara, **REFUGIO STATE BEACH** is travel-poster SoCal: camping under palm trees, a sandy cove for the kids, a rocky point and an offshore reef for Mom and

Dad. With 85 campsites, showers, \$17 (weeknights) and \$18 (weekends) per night. Reservations recommended in summer: (800) 444-PARK.

Just east of the point, a series of low rock ledges provide a tenuous hold for kelp, but are exposed to winter storms. Some years there is a small but thick and beautiful kelp forest, other years nothing. Halibut can be found on the sand bottom of the cove.

Refugio can be a base to explore a dozen more dive sites in Santa Barbara

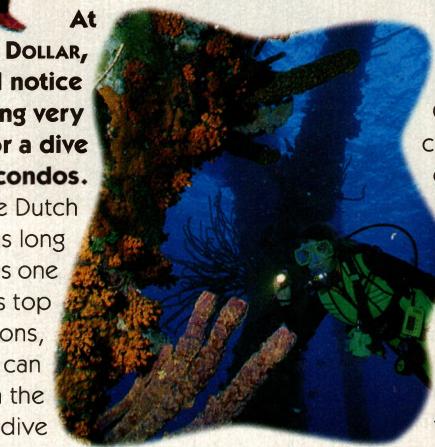
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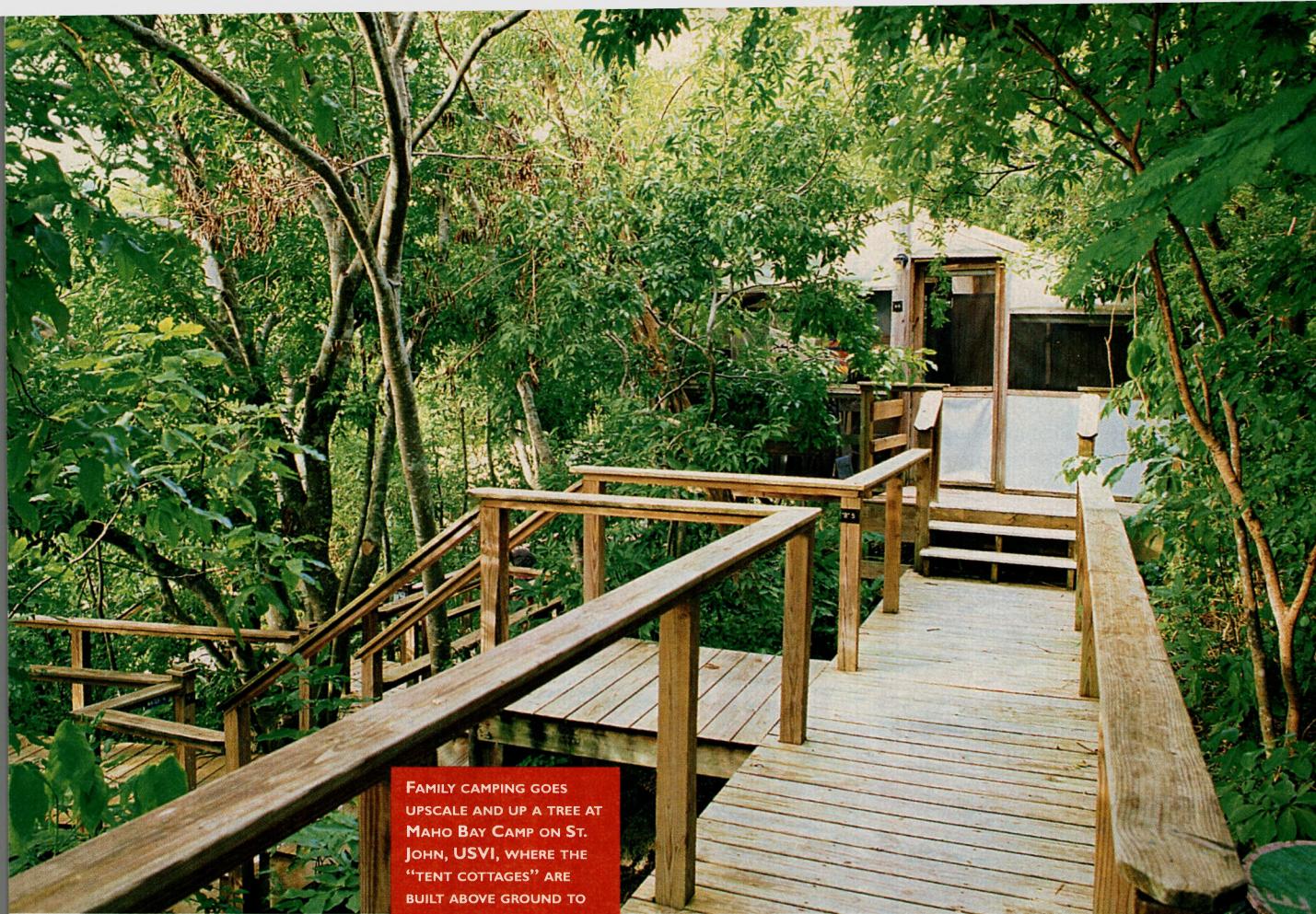
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CIRCLE NO. 40 ON READER SERVICE CARD



STEVE SIMONSEN

and Ventura counties. Try ARROYO BURRO STATE BEACH in Santa Barbara and Deer Creek Road south of Point Mugu.

"Twenty-six miles across the sea" from Long Beach, **Santa Catalina Island** has some of the finest diving on the West Coast. Avalon Bay has reliably clear water, a pristine kelp forest and several wrecks in the underwater park, plus all the amenities of a tourist destination. **HERMIT GULCH CAMPGROUND** (310-510-8368), with 60 campsites, is a little more than a mile up the road but taxis and trams are cheap in Avalon (golf carts can be rented but are more expensive) to take you to the underwater park, a shore dive from Casino Point. Avalon dive shops: **avalon aquatics** (310-510-1225), **CATALINA DIVERS** (310-510-0330) and **SCUBA LUV** (310-510-2616). Boat charters are available through **ARGO DIVING SERVICES** (310-510-2208).

You'll park your car in Long Beach or San Pedro and take a ferry to the island: Catalina Express (310-519-1212) or Catalina Cruises (310-491-5559).

The Virgin Islands

No, you can't get there in the family minivan, so this is a little pricey as camping

FAMILY CAMPING GOES UPSCALE AND UP A TREE AT MAHO BAY CAMP ON ST. JOHN, USVI, WHERE THE "TENT COTTAGES" ARE BUILT ABOVE GROUND TO PRESERVE THE NATURAL TERRAIN.

trips go. But the warm water! The tropical breeze! The Virgin Islands!

How about a campground right on the beach in the **Virgin Island National Park**, with a genuine coral reef just yards offshore? It's at **CINNAMON BAY** on St. John, USVI. Most sites have pre-erected tents with concrete floors, cots, stoves and utensils, minimizing the gear you tote through the airport. Per night: \$63 (cabins) and \$48 (tents) low season for two adults, \$15 for each additional person. You can rent scuba equipment, too. Cinnamon Bay is operated by Rosewood: (800) 539-9998 or (809) 776-6330.

Another possibility is nearby **MAHO BAY CAMP**, with more than 100 "tent cottages" built above ground and connected by wooden boardwalks so the natural terrain is not disturbed. These, too, have all the facilities. Per night: \$60 (off-season) and \$95 (high season) for two adults, \$10 (child) and \$12 (adult) for each additional person. Call (809) 776-6240 or (800) 392-9004.

To find out about diving on St. John, call **LOW KEY WATERSPORTS** at (800) 835-7718 or (809) 693-8999.

A must-see in the neighborhood is the underwater trail for snorkeling at Trunk Bay. It is sometimes overwhelmed by hun-

dreds of cruise ship tourists, but still ...

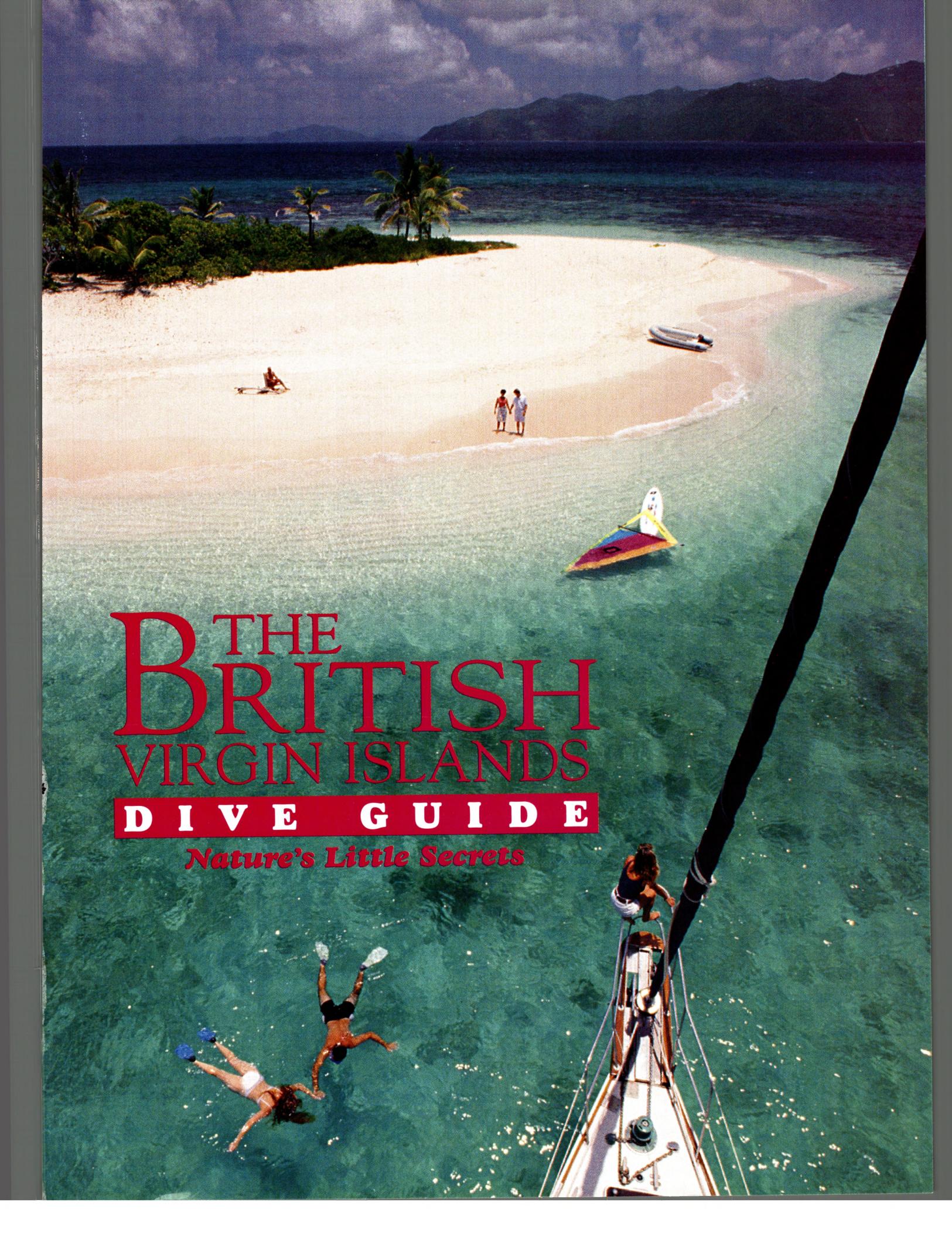
Baja California

Untrammeled, unspoiled and virtually unexplored wilderness camping and diving sites still exist, and they're in Baja California. Facilities are few, but so are restrictions. There are some slightly developed and inexpensive campgrounds, but most people camp *au naturel*.

The Pacific coast of Baja is a continuation of the marine environment off Washington and California, though the progressively warmer water means less kelp and fewer invertebrates but more warm-water species. The Gulf coast of Baja is more tropical: the Sea of Cortez is one of the world's great fish traps with, it is believed, more than 3,000 marine species.

Close to the border and just south of Ensenada, **Punta Banda** is one of the most popular areas for camping and diving in Baja. Two campgrounds on the north shore, **LA JOLLA BEACH CAMP** and **VILARENO**, have water, showers, toilets and fire rings. Dive anywhere along the rocky coast, but especially at La Bufadora, the famous blowhole, where there's kelp, sea lions and a large underwater arch.

South of Punta Banda there's only



THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

D I V E G U I D E

Nature's Little Secrets





The Baths
on Virgin Gorda
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*"Pristine and
crime free... there's
not a single traffic
light to be found
anywhere..."*

text and photography
by Jim & Odile Scheiner
Rainbow Visions Photography



Floating on a tranquil sea on the edge of the Caribbean lies a wondrous collection of over 40 islands, rocks and cays known as the British Virgin Islands. For years the secret destination of yachtsmen and a few intrepid divers, this amazing archipelago is now attracting vacationers from all over the world.

Pristine and crime free, there's not a single traffic light or fast food franchise to be found anywhere. While the outstanding natural beauty of the countless bays, lush hillsides and coral reefs is enough to quench the most dire sun-sea-and-sand craving, it's the quality of the accommodations, activities and professional services that makes for such an exceptional vacation.

Though 500 years have passed since Columbus sailed through and named these islands after Saint Ursula and her 11,000 virgin martyrs, the islands still seem undiscovered, beckoning to be explored. Today's visitors, venturing out by rent-a-car, sailing sloop, dive boat or even taxi, make their own discoveries

and find their own treasures. Whether it's a winding vista-laden drive along Tortola's cloud-kissed mountain peaks, discussing local folklore with a new-found islander friend or snorkeling off a deserted beach, you'll soon become enchanted with the simple pleasures of the BVI. Once these delightful unspoiled islands get under your skin, you'll be back for the first of many return visits. Like true love, it's a relationship that never goes stale, but only grows better over time.

THE ISLANDS ♦ The magic of the BVI, beyond perfect weather, great diving and friendly people, is found in its diversity. Instead of being limited to just one island, there are dozens to explore, each with its own personality and attractions. The islands are so close together that inter-island travel by ferry, dive boat, day-sail charter or even windsurfer is a part of daily life. The bygone days of pirates and buccaneers live on with scores of luxurious yachts and tall masted schooners slicing through the azure sea as they sail from one hidden anchorage to the next.

The major islands are Tortola, with Road Town, the territory's capital and a fast-growing center for international finance; tranquil Virgin Gorda, home to the Little Dix Resort and the famous Baths; remote Anegada, the sunken island with a population of 250 and a maximum altitude of 26 feet; and laid-back Jost Van Dyke, where Foxy's Beach Bar hosts one of the most infamous New Year's Eve parties in the world. Many of the smaller islands are uninhabited—some even for sale. Imagine playing Robinson Crusoe on your own deserted island.

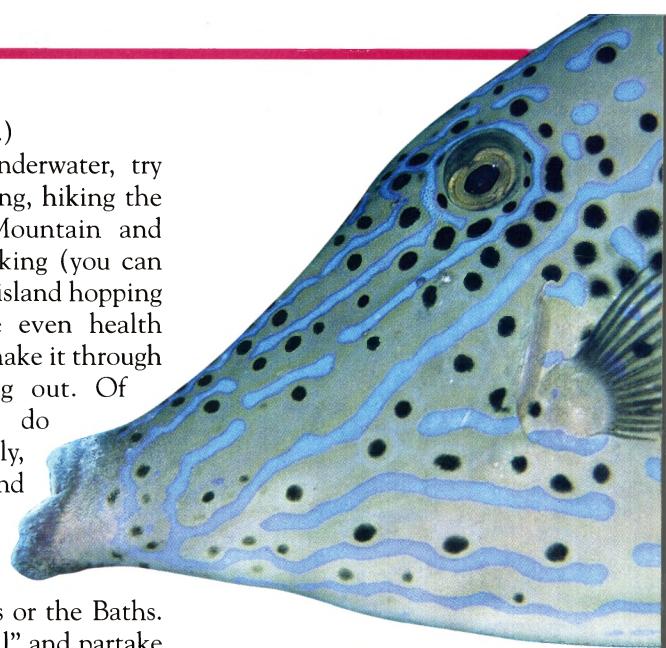
Scattered throughout the islands are lush resorts, exquisite holiday homes, villas and small hotels. Many visitors are surprised by the amount of personal attention lavished upon them; everyone seems eager to help them fully enjoy their vacation.

The BVI is the perfect destination for traveling with non-divers. Not only are snorkelers welcome on the dive boats, but there are so many other activities that there just isn't enough time to do them all. (The underwater world is so inviting that non-divers often become divers through either a sanctioned half day "resort" course

or a full certification course.)

When you're not underwater, try windsurfing, ocean kayaking, hiking the nature trails on Sage Mountain and Gorda Peak, mountain biking (you can start your ride at the top), island hopping and shopping. There are even health clubs for those who can't make it through a week without working out. Of course, you can always do nothing and do it perfectly, stretched out on a fine sand beach or enjoying a cool breeze in a hammock. For a taste of the yachting life, try a day sail to the Caves or the Baths. Don't be afraid to go "local" and partake in the nefarious full moon party held monthly at Bomba's Shack on Tortola or sample real native cooking at one of the many local restaurants.

If, after a full day of fun and sun, you're still awake after dinner, there's always a friendly game of darts at the nearest pub, a local band playing "jump up" somewhere close by or a walk under the brightest canopy of stars you've seen in years. Relax and enjoy the romance.



Great diving, healthy reefs and lots of topside attractions make the BVI the perfect destination for divers and non-divers alike.

THE BVI DIVE OPERATORS ASSOCIATION

The members of the BVI Dive Operators Association are dedicated to providing the highest quality service, educating islanders and visitors in safe and environmentally sound diving practices and protecting the marine environment.

LAND-BASED DIVE COMPANIES

BASKIN' IN THE SUN	800-233-7938
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BLUE WATER DIVERS	809-494-2874
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DIVE BVI	800-848-7078
Spanish Town & Leverick Bay, Virgin Gorda and Peter Island & Marina Cay	
KILBRIDE'S UNDERWATER TOURS	800-932-4286
Bitter End Yacht Club, Virgin Gorda	
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UNDERWATER PHOTO-VIDEO

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Prospect Reef Resort, Tortola	

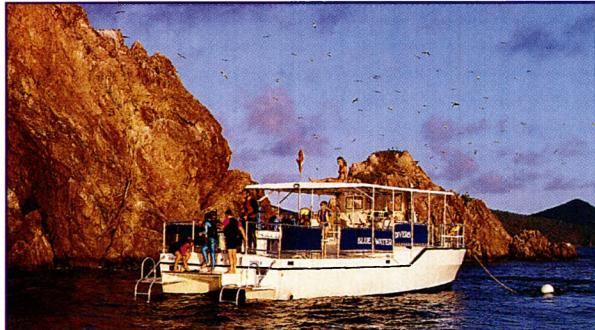


Baskin in the Sun on Tortola has two locations at Prospect Reef Resort and Soper's Hole Marina in the West End. Our three dive boats do a two-tank morning dive and a single tank afternoon trip plus regular night dives. We offer full dive service, you never need to lift a tank! Visit our web site at <http://www.dive-baskin.com>

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E-Mail: dbvi@caribsurf.com

800-848-7078



The Diving

In a word, the diving is exceptional. There is such an incredible variety of dive sites that every day you'll be able to explore yet another aspect of the BVI unique topography. From remote off-shore pinnacles to lush coral gardens, from coral and sponge encrusted boulder fields to fantastic shipwrecks; no two dives are alike and each of the over 70 established sites has its own special attractions.

Most of the diving is done on the islands and rocks that line the Sir Francis Drake Channel. Their outlying location assures superior visibility and healthy coral. No matter what the weather there are always calm, protected places to dive. Because there are so many dive sites and so few dive boats, many of the sites are rarely visited and still have that virgin exploratory feel.

Some of the more spectacular dives are on remote sea mounts laced with dramatic ledges and undercuts. **Blonde Rock, Santa Monica Rock and the Invisibles** are teeming with clouds of fish and offer the possibility of encounters with larger pelagics such as cobia, amberjack, sharks and turtles.

The Indians is one of those special sites that is perfect for both scuba divers and snorkelers. Its calm, protected waters and easy navigation make it ideal for either following a guided tour or exploring solo with your dive buddy. You'll find that the slower you go, the more you see—cleaning stations galore, jawfish excavating their burrows, glassy sweepers dancing in unison in a small cave. More of *Nature's Little Secrets* revealed. **The Chimney**, on Great Dog near Virgin Gorda, offers a similarly spirited experience.

In winter, humpback whales arrive to give birth in the warm protected waters of the BVI. Though rarely encountered underwater, divers often hear the whale's haunting songs. The mournful melody is more felt than heard as the sonic vibrations pass right through your body into your soul.

SHIPWRECKS ♦ The best wreck dive in the Caribbean lies in the calm waters of the BVI. The **RMS Rhone** was a 310-foot-long iron-hulled steam sailor that sank off Salt Island in the Great Hurricane of 1867. A century's worth of marine growth has transformed its skeleton into an object of sublime beauty. Evocative of a sunken Atlantis, five sets of "Greek columns" grace the wreck, as well as two huge masts, a massive pro-



The 310 foot long *RMS Rhone* is one of the most popular wreck dives in the world (left). Colorful coral reefs and an abundance of marine life make for unforgettable dives (above).

peller and an intact bow section that invites safe penetration. Legions of friendly fish, along with the *Rhone*'s unique place in maritime history, round out the attraction. For underwater photographers, there's hardly a better "studio" anywhere.

Seven miles out in the open Atlantic, halfway to Anegada, lies the enticing wreck of the *Chikuzen*. In August of 1981, this abandoned 246-foot Korean refrigeration vessel drifted through the BVI before settling to its final resting place on the barren sand bottom. It has become a fertile oasis in an otherwise empty desert—attracting marine life from miles around. The *Chikuzen*'s remote location protects its fecundity and assures that every trip out there is a true diving adventure.

Over the centuries, Anegada's treacherous Horseshoe Reef has claimed hundreds of wooden ships, though today little remains to be seen. Other more modern and more conveniently located shipwrecks include the *Fearless*, the *Marie L.*, the *Pat* and the recently sunk 146-foot *Inganess Bay*.

DIVING SERVICES ♦ The seven members of the BVI Dive Operators Association have all been in business for over 15 years and take great pride in their professionalism and the quality of the diving they offer. The emphasis is on uncrowded boats with lots of personal attention, both above and below the water. While some of the facilities are located at resorts, all are independently owned and operated and most offer multiple locations and 800 numbers that ring directly in the BVI. Professional underwater photo/video services, including rentals, instruction and *Rhone*-dive videos are available.

Visitors can choose from a variety of diving options. Many stay in hotels and holiday homes and go out daily with one of the day dive boats. Others book space on a fully-crewed, dedicated live-aboard dive boat and spend the week diving and sailing from one island to the next. A unique BVI product, "rendezvous diving", serves the large number of vacationers on charted yachts. Instead of having to return to shore to get on a dive boat, the boat comes out to you, takes you diving and returns you to your yacht when you're done—nothing could be simpler. Some mix rendezvous diving with doing it themselves. Well-maintained rental equipment is readily available and tank fill stations are spread throughout the islands.

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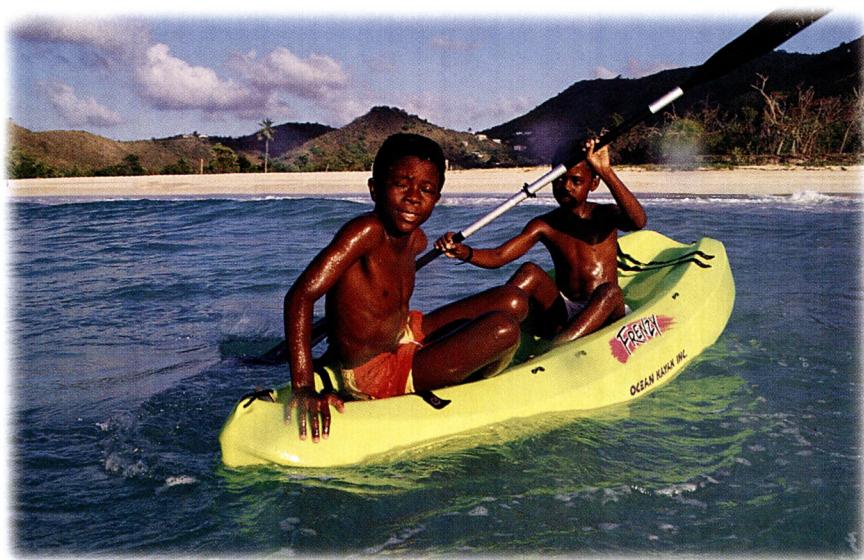


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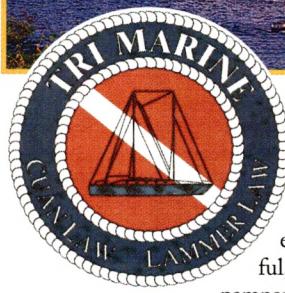
THE PEOPLE ♦ Settled by the Dutch in the early 1600's and claimed by the British in 1672, the BVI was, for centuries, a haven for pirates. In 1853, following an ill-fated plantation era, the BVI was abandoned to its former slaves. The next 100 years passed with hardly any outside influence. It is this long period of isolation combined with local ownership of the land that has given the people of the BVI so much quiet pride and dignity, as well as a great sense of independence and self-reliance.

BV-Islanders, as the residents are called, are friendly though reserved and enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the Caribbean. Spared the dehumanizing consequences of mass tourism, the islanders still treat visitors as welcome guests.



PARADISE AWAITS ♦ So while the rest of the world is catapulted screaming and e-mailing into the 21st Century, isn't it nice to know that somewhere there still exists an oasis of sanity and safety, of fun and friendliness. A place where excellent diving is just the start of an incredible vacation. A place where you can slow down, relax and renew yourself and your faith in the beauty of the natural world. That place is closer than you think. Come play in our paradise—the British Virgin Islands—and experience nature's little secrets.

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FAST FACTS & TRAVEL INFORMATION

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW TO MAXIMIZE YOUR VACATION

CURRENCY: The U.S. dollar, Traveler's Checks and credit cards are widely accepted.

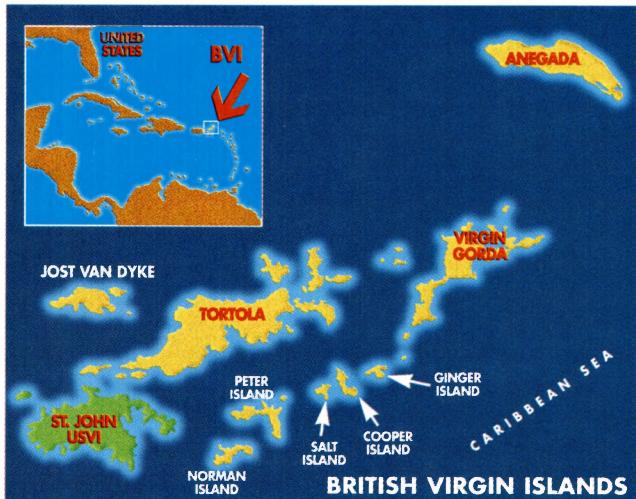
ENTRY REQUIREMENTS: Proof of citizenship is required. A passport is best; a driver's license is not sufficient. There is a \$10 departure tax.

GOVERNMENT: The islands are a British Dependent Territory, with a locally elected ministerial government with a Crown appointed governor.

MISC: Electricity is 110 volt, just like USA. Cable TV is available in many places. Cars have steering wheels on the left side (American style), but are driven on the left side of the road (European style). English is the language, but often spoken with a strong "calypso" accent. Dress code is casual, but please keep your beachwear limited to the beach. Telephone service is excellent and includes cellular service and internet access.

CLIMATE: Climate is subtropical. The tropical sun is tempered by the constant trade winds. Water temperatures average 82° in summer and 78° in winter.

HOW TO GET THERE: Most visitors coming from North America fly into San Juan, Puerto Rico and then take the 35-minute American Eagle flight into Beef Island, Tortola. You can confidently check your bags all the way through to Tortola (especially if you're flying American Airlines into San Juan). Another option is to fly direct to nearby St. Thomas and take one of the many inter-island ferries that ply the scenic route between the islands.



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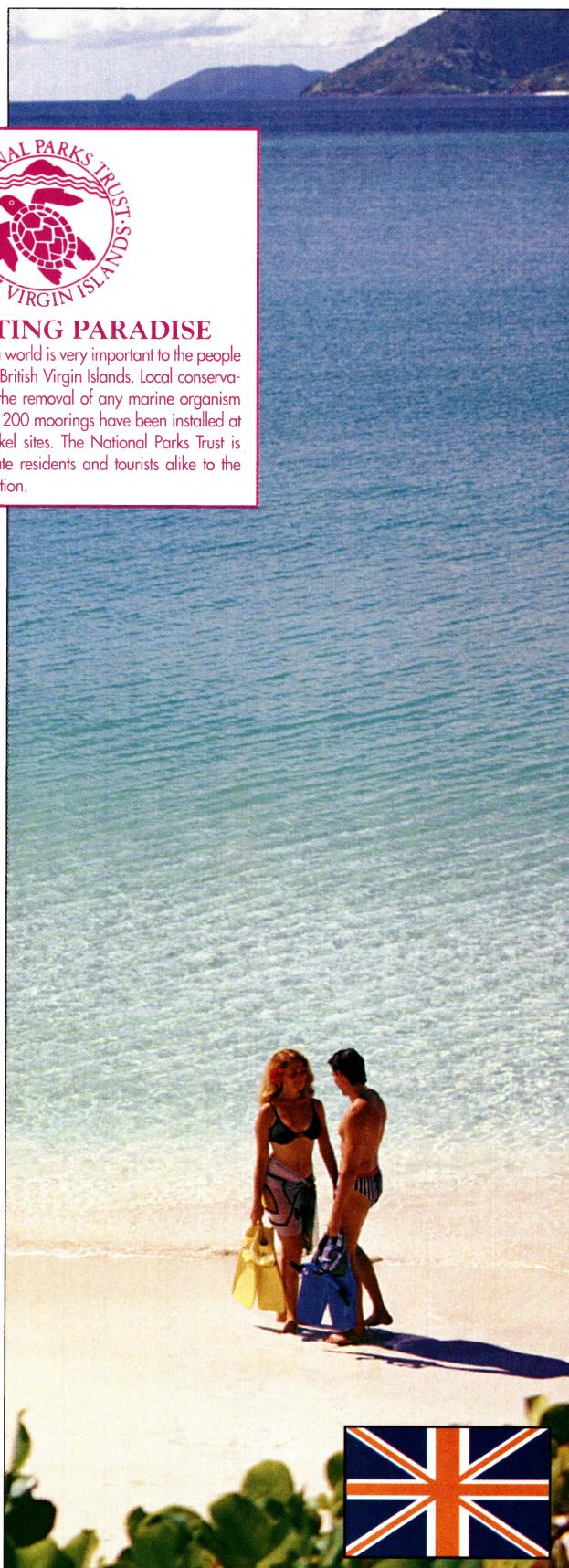
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PROTECTING PARADISE

Preserving the undersea world is very important to the people and government of the British Virgin Islands. Local conservation regulations forbid the removal of any marine organism from the ocean. Almost 200 moorings have been installed at popular dive and snorkel sites. The National Parks Trust is working hard to educate residents and tourists alike to the importance of conservation.



one paved road down the length of the 900-mile peninsula. Numberless dirt roads branch off to either coast. Follow one to the coast and park on the beach. Most of the time there will be a camp occupied by local fishermen. Hire one to take you diving in his outboard motor-driven *panga*; he'll know where.

Which dirt road? Almost any road going to a point will take you to good diving. On the Pacific coast, try the road to **Punta Baja**. About three miles offshore is the Sacramento Reef. The 271-foot side-wheel steamer *SS Sacramento* is only one of many wrecks on the two-mile-long reef, which is thick with kelp, lobster and fish.

On the Gulf coast, take the road to **Bahia De Los Angeles**. This six-mile-wide bay contains more than a dozen small islands and islets with rocky shorelines. The water is usually clear, calm and warm. Among the full-time residents is a group of humpback whales.

This is camping and diving for the self-reliant only. You'll need a vehicle capable of dealing with rough dirt roads and deep sand. Take spare parts and lots of water. If trouble strikes either in or out of the water, do not expect to be rescued.

The reward? A beach that sweeps from the rocky point for miles without another human, without a footprint. A reef thick with life that's all yours.

Lake Diving

Going camping at the lake? Maybe it's worth a dive, too. Some that are include:

Lake Cumberland, Ky. Try to spear the legendary catfish big enough to swallow a VW. Also, a diver's Treasure Hunt in August. Call DIVER'S DEN in Somerset: (606) 679-4748.

Lake Ouachita, Ark. Heavily wooded, lots of deer. Spearfishing of gamefish like catfish, walleye, crappie and bass allowed. LAKE OUACHITA DIVE CENTER floats on the lake: (501) 760-1500.

Lake Tahoe, Calif.-Nev. Alpine scenery, 100-foot vis, lots of campgrounds. SUN SPORTS (916-541-6000) sells a diving map.

Lake Huron, Mich. Many wrecks in and near the Straits of Mackinac, many campgrounds on the lake. Contact REC DIVING TRAVEL, (800) 999-0303 or (810) 549-0303.

June Lake, Calif. Annual Labor Day weekend crawdad feed and lake cleanup at 8,700-foot OH! RIDGE CAMPGROUND. Contact ANTELOPE VALLEY DESERT DIVERS, (805) 944-3652.

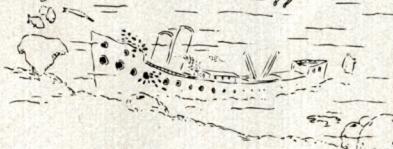
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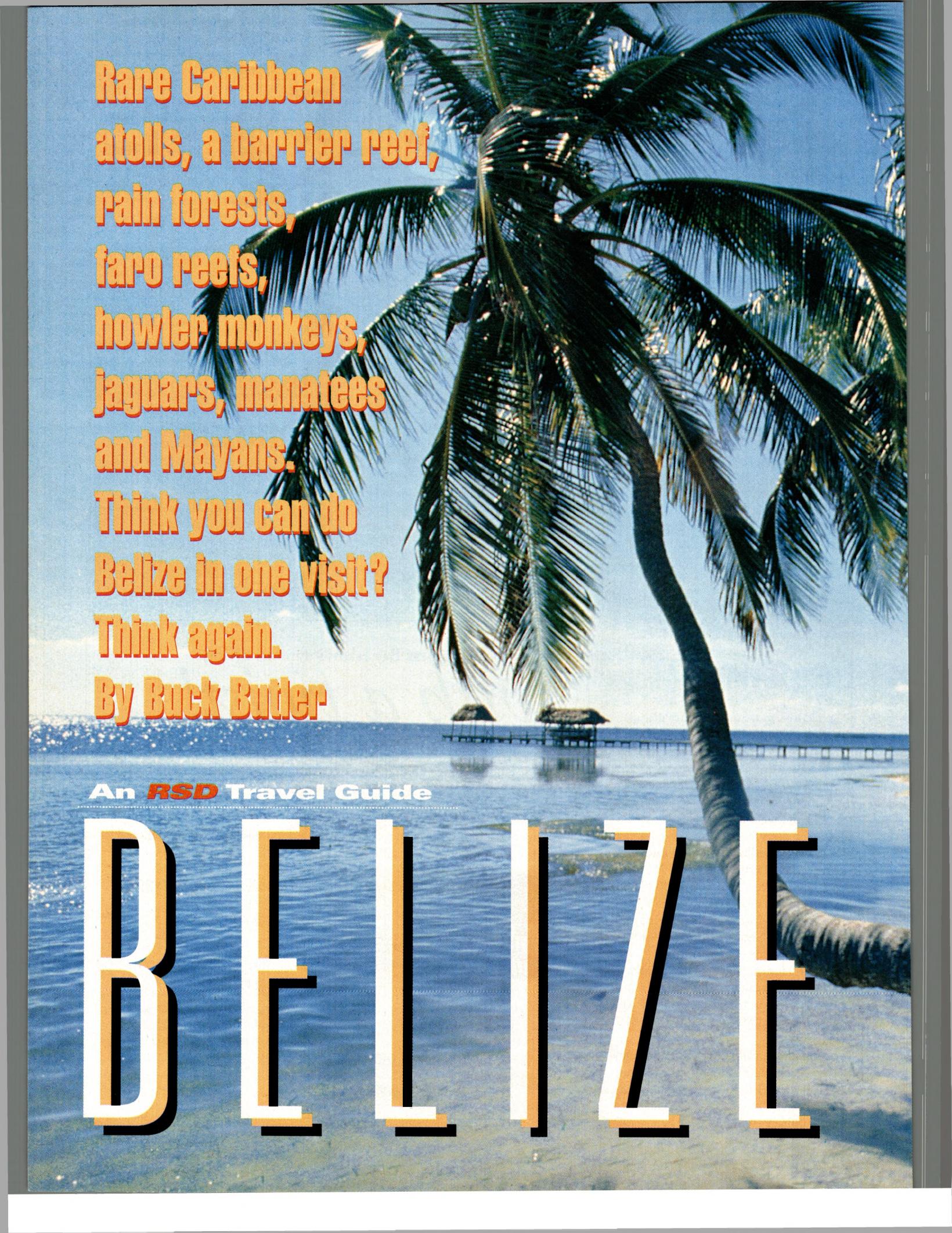
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By Buck Butler

An **RSD** Travel Guide

BELIZE



GREG JOHNSTON



If the entire country of Belize were to come unhinged from the Central American isthmus, to split along its borders with Mexico and Guatemala and float unmoored into the Caribbean Sea to become an island, few divers would notice the difference. Why? Because Belize is something of an anomaly in the Central American community, having more in common with the Cayman Islands than with Nicaragua or Guatemala.

Tucked beneath the upward curve of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, tiny Belize is a young, peaceful democracy in an area known for political upheaval. It's an English-speaking former British colony in a Spanish colonial stronghold. And Belize is one of the few countries to embrace fully the twin directives of "ecotourism"—enthusiastically promoting tourism while vigorously protecting the fragile resources that visitors are so eager to see.

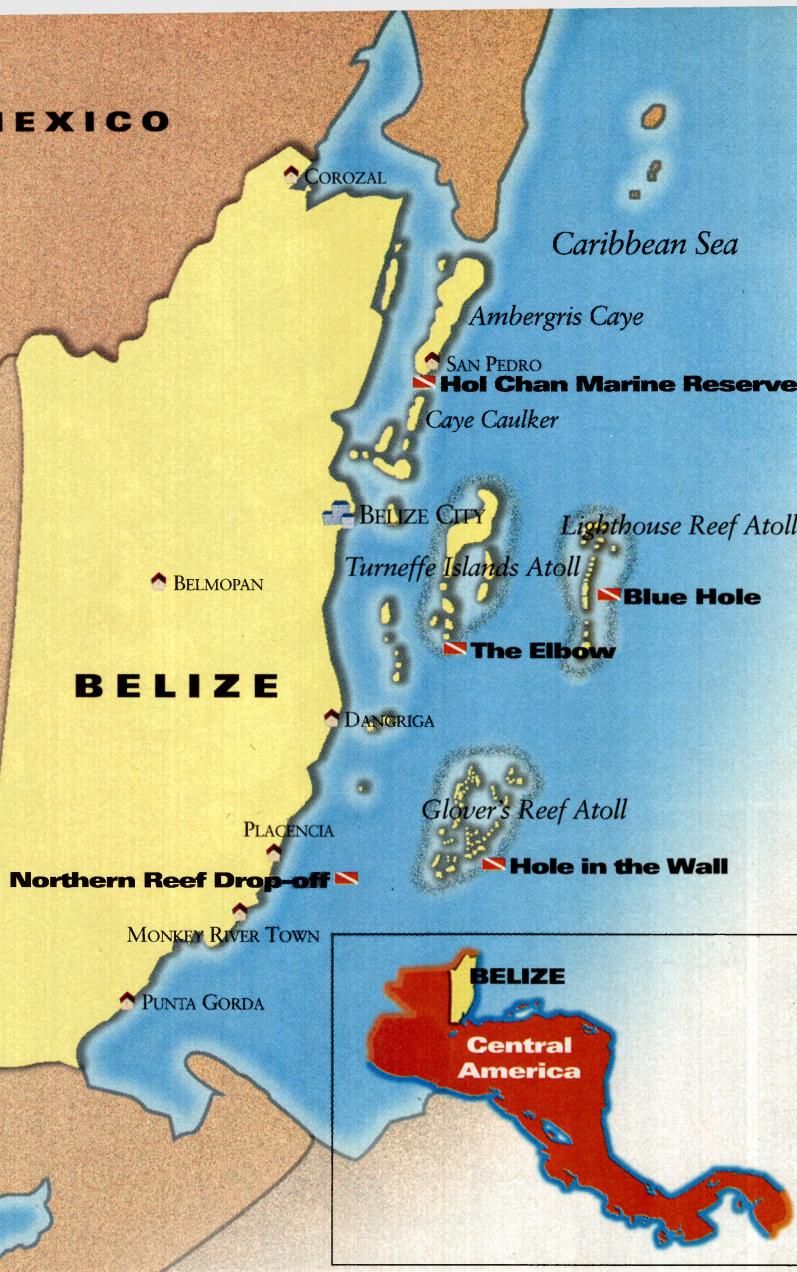
And what resources they are. Although smaller than the state of New Hampshire, Belize is blessed with what seems an unfair share of natural and man-made wonders. Thick jungle—much of it protected by law—covers massive tracts of the country's interior. Exotic wildlife like howler monkeys,

FRANS CANTING/MINDEN PICTURES

GREG JOHNSTON

MEXICO

GUATEMALA



jaguars and tapirs roam the rain forests. Excellently preserved ruins stand testament to a Mayan culture that numbered 750,000 people and thrived in elaborate stone palaces, temples and pyramids 1,000 years before Columbus got out of diapers.

And awaiting divers off Belize's 180-mile-long coastline is an ocean of diving opportunities. Think of it as the Pacific Ocean in a nutshell. Where Australia has the longest barrier reef in the world, Belize has the longest barrier reef in both the northern and western hemispheres, snaking along the coast from Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula to the Bay of Honduras. Where the Pacific is liberally sprinkled with atolls, Belize offers three of only four atolls in the entire Caribbean. And like the Pacific, where palm-studded islands topped with sugar-white sand are ubiquitous, more than 200 cayes beckon in Belize's Caribbean

with the promise of secluded paradise.

THE BARRIER REEF

The feature most closely associated with Belize in most divers' minds is the barrier reef, and with good reason. Rising from the seafloor like a living Great Wall of China, the Belize Barrier Reef roughly parallels the coastline for 185 miles. It is the largest single reef in the Caribbean and is the backbone for hundreds of dive sites.

Inside the reef, the seafloor is sandy, and dive boats use cuts in the reef to get to the seaward side, where the outer fore reef offers more dive sites than you can shake a fin at. There are some dive operations based on the mainland that regularly dive the barrier reef, mainly in Belize City and Dangriga. But most of the boats that access the barrier reef are stationed on the cayes that are conve-

niently located just inside the reef. There are dive operations on Caye Caulker and a dive resort, the Blue Marlin Lodge, on South Water Caye. But dive central for Belize is Ambergris Caye, where the reef is a five- to 15-minute hop from the piers that line the caye's east coast.

► Ambergris Caye

Take a stroll through San Pedro, the only settlement on Belize's largest caye, and it's easy to think that the whole town was thrown together just in time for this weekend's fiesta and is slated to be dismantled on Monday morning. An air of blissful impermanence illuminates San Pedro's sand streets, which are lined with brightly painted plywood signs and closely packed clapboard buildings.

Take a closer look, however, and you'll discover that San Pedro is actually Belize's most successful tourist town, and it's packed with divers' digs, bed-and-breakfasts, full-service dive resorts, gift shops and some excellent restaurants. Flights touch down at San Pedro's dirt airstrip nearly every half hour, bringing loads of Belizeans and international visitors for their own moments in the sun.

Ambergris Caye is actually the southern extension of a peninsula that drops into Belizean waters from Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula to the north, and is separated from the peninsula by a narrow channel. The island's connection to Mexico is more than just geographic. Somehow, despite its ample tourist offerings, San Pedro still feels like a little Mexican fishing village. You'll hear more Spanish spoken here than in other parts of the country, and during that hungry break between morning and afternoon dives you'll find burritos as tasty as any you'll find north of Belize and south of Texas.

DIVING

Ambergris Caye is to Belize what Cozumel is to Mexico—the focal point for the country's dive activity. The barrier reef is closer to Ambergris than any point on the coast, and because of this, there are more dive operators in San Pedro than in the rest of the country combined. In addition to diving the sites along Ambergris's section of the barrier reef, operators in San Pedro run day trips and overnight trips to Turneffe Islands Atoll and Lighthouse Reef Atoll, including the Blue Hole. If you're going to be on Ambergris for a week, don't miss a chance to get outside the reef.

Diving the outer reef off Ambergris is something like flying over the Rocky

ANN GHISINGER

Mountains. The reef here is a series of massive spur-and-groove formations—the spurs are high-profile crests of coral and the grooves are deep canyons that empty onto a wide sandy shelf on the ocean side of the reef at around 90 feet. Great walls of coral rise on both sides of these valleys, and tunnels, swim-throughs and mini-caverns mark the reef throughout. Although the currents on the reef are generally negligible, most operators make drift dives. Be sure to keep an eye on your dive guide so you don't get left behind.

Diving tip: On your first dive, get down into the reef's canyons to explore. For a second, shallower dive, swim perpendicular to the canyons and above them. This way, you'll get to peek into several of the cuts without pushing your depth.

DIVE SITES

It's hard to go wrong

here. Dozens of named and unnamed sites line the reef off Ambergris, each with its own unique twists and turns, but most are similar in their high-profile bottomography.

► At Mata Caverns, you'll find the reef top at about 55 feet and a series of canyons that empties onto the outer reef at 95 feet. Once you're outside the reef, turn around to journey to the center of the reef in the twisting tunnels, swim-throughs and mini-caverns that give this site its name. Be sure to bring a light for this dive, as you won't see the light at the end of some of these tunnels until you round a dark corner.

► Like many of the sites here, Tuffy Canyons is also

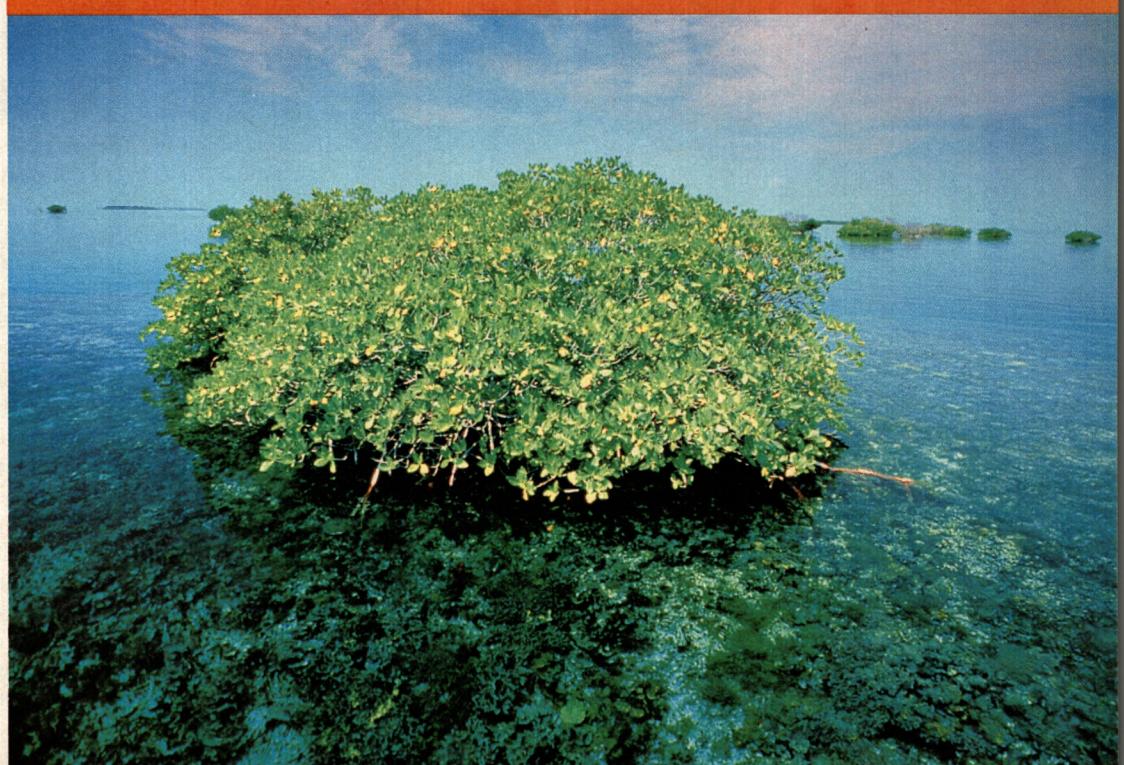
marked by deep cuts in the reef. Look for cagey barracuda, fat grouper and snapper hiding at the bottom of many of the canyons. I was here in August, when the snapper come in to breed, and thick schools of mahoganys and grays poured over the canyon walls in silver waterfalls. Keep one eye on the blue for the occa-

sional spotted eagle ray and blacktip shark that cruises by.

► Hol Chan Marine Reserve was the first marine reserve in Belize, and is the country's most popular shallow dive and snorkel site. In the channel for which Hol Chan is named (it's Mayan for "little channel"), you'll get a max depth of 30



ABOVE: GIANT BARREL SPONGES ARE TYPICAL OF THE MAGNITUDE OF LIFE ON BELIZE'S BARRIER REEF—PROFUSE AND PROLIFIC. BELOW: ALONG THE BARRIER REEF AND ON THE ATOLLS, MANGROVES TAKE ROOT WHERE NOTHING ELSE WILL GROW, FORMING TINY ISLANDS THAT MAY EVENTUALLY BECOME DRY LAND. THESE "WET" CAYES PROVIDE SHELTER FOR JUVENILE FISH AND A ONE-OF-A-KIND OPPORTUNITY FOR DIVERS.



feet, but it's worth strapping on a tank to swim with the mobs of reef fish that benefit from the reserve's protection. Look for stingrays and peacock flounder on the sandy floor of the channel, and reflective walls of silversides that fill gaps in the reef. Hol Chan also makes an excellent night dive, when you'll find giant parrotfish

sleeping in the reef's nooks and crannies and the occasional reef squid fluttering angelically near the surface.

► Another site that can be done on scuba or snorkel is **Shark-Ray Alley**, Ambergris's own animal-encounter dive. Divemasters feed the hungry assembly of nurse sharks and stingrays that collect on this sandy spot in eight feet of water. It's a unique opportunity to see normally reclusive nurse sharks swimming freely, but once you tire of the staged feeding, fin over to the surrounding coral heads to check out the creepy-eyed nurse sharks' natural habitat, where they retire,

shoving their heads ostrich-like into the reef. The sand bottom also offers an opportunity to get a good look at life off the reef—watch for sand divers, sand tilefish and bridled gobies doing their best to go unnoticed.

ACCOMMODATIONS

San Pedro offers the widest variety of accommodations in Belize—far too many options to list here. In town you can easily find small hotels and bed-and-breakfasts for less than US\$50 per night. Room rates generally vary with the season. The high

season falls between November and April, which means you can find some good deals during the summer. The more deluxe beach resorts are found on the edges of town. Resorts that cater to divers include **Ramon's Village**, a full-service resort complete with the best beach in San Pedro, dozens of palm-thatched cabanas and a full-service dive operation.

The **Belize Yacht Club** offers plush suites just a 10-minute walk from downtown and the **Victoria House Resort** has 29 casitas and villas with lush tropical gardens. If you're looking for something a little smaller, **Changes in Latitude B&B** and the **Hideaway Sports Lodge** are also popular with divers. To the north, **Captain Morgan's Retreat** and **Journey's End Caribbean Club**

are two beachfront resorts a little farther out of town.

DIVERSIONS

Most hotels and resorts will arrange excursions for your nondiving days. Get on a **fishing charter** to angle for bonefish and tarpon inside the reef and bigger gamefish outside the reef. Take a **manatee-watching tour** to Goff's Caye. Hop a plane for day trips to the **Tikal ruins** in Guatemala. Or take a **birdwatching tour** on Ambergris to seek out the roseate spoonbill. **Windsurfers, jet skis, catamarans, kayaks and canoes** are also available for rent in San Pedro.

You'll have no trouble finding a good meal in San Pedro. **Elvi's Kitchen** is a perennial favorite, as much for its sand floor and black-tie waiters as for its excellent seafood specials. The **Lagoon** restaurant in the **Casablanca Hotel** features a diverse gourmet menu. For the best burritos in town, try **Mickey's Place** for lunch on Wednesday—the only day Mickey makes them. For good Chinese, try the **Jade Garden** south of town, and for Italian, the place is **Little Italy** on Barrier Reef Drive (also known as Front Street).

THE ATOLLS

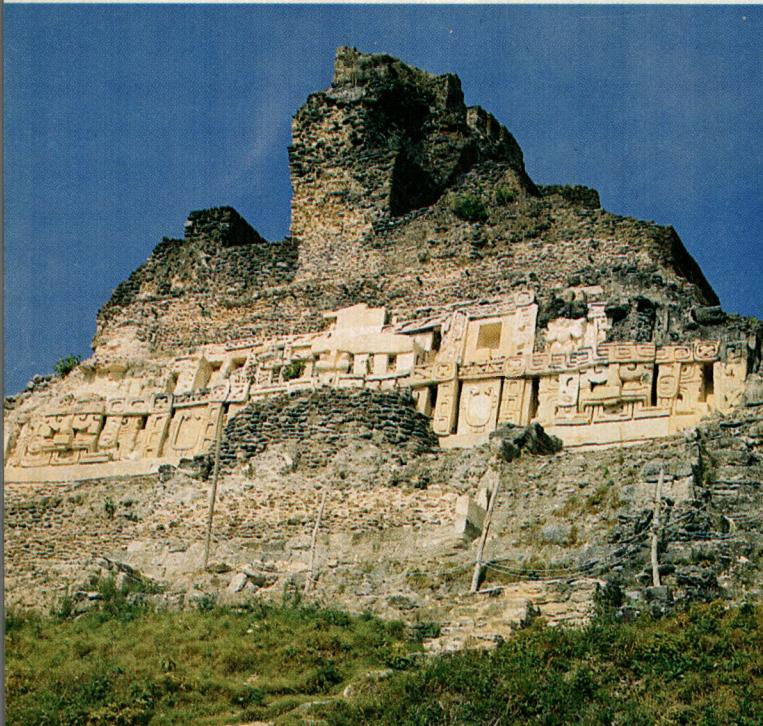
Beyond the Belize Barrier Reef lie three of the Caribbean's four atolls, irregular, oblong coral rings surrounding a central lagoon and topped by idyllic specks of sand and coconut palms: Turneffe Islands Atoll, Lighthouse Reef Atoll and Glover's Reef Atoll.

In the Pacific, atolls emerge where volcanoes have sunk into the sea, with coral covering their ancient rims. Not so in Belize, where chunks of earth that were once attached to the mainland are now sliding into the sea. As the land continues to sink into the abyss, the corals keep reproducing and growing to stay close enough to the surface to survive.

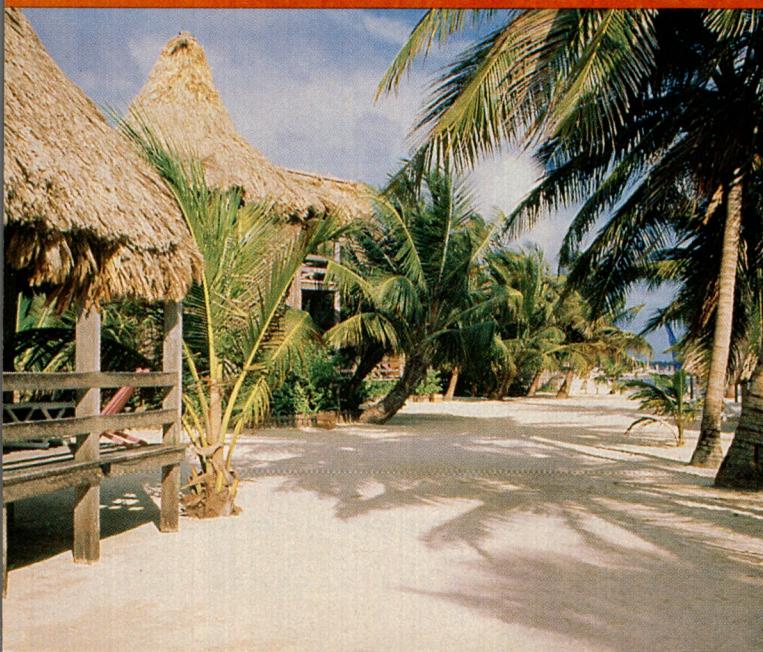
The result is three dramatic reef systems that cover thousands of feet of limestone. The outer edges of Belize's atolls are lined by coral walls that in places plunge 10,000 feet. These walls have been eroded into deeply textured faces pocked with overhangs, crevices, tunnels and pinnacles. In the shelter of the atolls are shallow patch reefs, mangrove swamps and beds of turtle grass.

► Turneffe Islands

More than 200 small cayes top Turneffe Islands Atoll, the largest of the three atolls and the closest to the mainland. The vast majority of these tiny islands are covered



ABOVE: LEAVE TIME ON YOUR ITINERARY TO EXPLORE SOME OF BELIZE'S SPECTACULARLY PRESERVED MAYAN RUINS LIKE THESE AT XUNANTUNICH. BELOW: MANY RESORTS IN BELIZE OFFER ACCOMMODATIONS IN THATCHED CABANAS, LIKE THESE AT RAMON'S VILLAGE ON AMBERGRIS CAYE.



FRANKLIN VIOLA

RICK HEYDEL

by mangroves, whose gnarled roots provide protection and nutrients for juvenile fish. And while the same nutrients that feed the abundant nursery sometimes cloud waters on the reef, the payoff is big: massive concentrations of fish.

The eastern shore of Turneffe Atoll is protected by a 35-mile-long coral wall that serves as a magnet for a range of fish life. Small tropicals crowd the reef top among waving fields of gorgonians, while schools of bigger pelagics including horse-eye jack, crevalle jack, black snapper, cubera snapper, mutton snapper, permit and blacktip sharks patrol the outer wall. Reefs on the leeward west side of the atoll are less dramatic, featuring spur-and-groove reefs and some high-profile coral heads, but no less fishy. Most of the diving takes place at the southern end of the atoll.

DIVE SITES

► On the east side of the atoll, check out sites like **Majestic Point** and **Black Beauty**, where a spur-and-groove reef becomes a series of canyons and swim-throughs before dropping from 70 feet to 150 feet on a sheer coral wall.

► On the back side, the 65-foot wooden wreck of the *Sayonara* is home to schooling grunts and two resident eels—a green and a spotted moray.

► Nearby is **Permit Paradise**, and while you might find more permit on the other side of the atoll, look for spotted eagle rays, which sometimes cruise in over the gradual slope and the coral heads buzzing with life.

► The signature dive at Turneffe is the **Elbow** at the extreme southern tip of the atoll, where colliding nutrient-rich currents bring fish together in cinematic proportions. Giant barrel sponges and some of the biggest gorgonians you'll see anywhere make the wall at this site spectacular, but if you're looking at the wall, you're missing the real show. When the current is ripping, thousands of horse-eye jacks, crevalle jacks, snapper, grouper and permit hang in massive schools over the wall. The strong current and typical profile—90 to 120 feet—make this an advanced drift dive.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The three resorts on Turneffe transfer guests by boat from Belize City to the atoll. Turneffe Island Lodge offers comfortable accommodations for 24 divers and a full-service dive operation on Little Caye Bokel at the southern end of the atoll. **Blackbird Caye Resort** is a small, dedicated "eco-lodge" that emphasizes ecology and

education. Turneffe Flats Resort accommodates 14 guests and offers diving as well as fishing on the expansive flats that make Turneffe one of the best places in world to cast for tarpon and bonefish. All three resorts offer trips to Lighthouse Reef Atoll to dive the Blue Hole.

Lighthouse Reef

Open any book or magazine article on Belize and you're likely to see one of the most recognizable images in all of diving—the great indigo mouth of Lighthouse Reef's Blue Hole. The Blue Hole yawns open smack dab in the middle of

the atoll and is the magnet that draws hordes of divers here every year. But if the Blue Hole is all you see of Lighthouse Reef, you're missing out on some of the best diving in Belize.

Lighthouse Reef is farther offshore than the other two atolls, but there are plenty of ways to get here. Dive boats from San Pedro make the trip regularly, the live-aboards stop here every week and there's one resort on the atoll, which has its own landing strip.

Perhaps because of its distance from the mainland and the relatively few mangrove cayes here, Lighthouse Reef offers

Dive In



Location
Belize—all 8,866 square miles of it—lies at the western edge of the Caribbean Sea, bordered on the north by Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula and on the west and south by Guatemala. The country is just 180 miles long and 68 miles across at its widest point.



Topography
Belize lies flat in the north and on the coast, but rises to more than 3,000 feet above sea level in the Maya Mountains in the south and west. Tropical forests cover much of the mountains and reach into the western and northern sections of Belize. Off the coast, but inside the protective barrier reef are more than 200 cayes, ranging from some the size of a regulation basketball court to Ambergris Caye, which is 25 miles long and four-and-a-half miles across at its widest point. Outside the reef lie three of the Caribbean's four atolls.



Climate
Belize's climate is subtropical, which means pretty comfortable year-round, especially on the coast, cayes and atolls where ocean breezes moderate hot summer temps. During the summer, expect highs in the mid-80Fs and lows in the low to mid-70Fs. Winter is just a bit cooler, with highs in the low 80Fs and lows in the mid to high 60Fs. Belize's wet season stretches from June to November—take this into consideration, and be prepared to sit out a day or two of diving if you travel during the summer, especially to the atolls, which lie outside the protective barrier reef. The south gets more than twice as much rain as the north, with Punta Gorda recording as much as 190 inches in a single year.



Water Temperatures
Consistently warm, from the high 70Fs in winter to the mid-80Fs in summer.



Visibility
Water clarity varies, with the best visibility occurring in late spring and summer. On the barrier reef and atolls, you'll often find visibility of 100 feet or greater, but rough weather and plankton can lower it to 50 feet or less.



Language
Belize is a former British holding and English is still the official language. The spoken language of choice for many Belizeans, however, is Creole, which is never written. Spanish is also widely spoken.



Currency
The Belizean dollar (Bze\$) trades at Bze\$2 to US\$. U.S. currency, credit cards and traveler's checks are accepted throughout the country, but you'll need Belizean money for some vendors and restaurants. Most prices are quoted in Belizean dollars, but make sure before you order the most expensive entrée on the menu—some prices, especially at tourist resorts, are quoted in U.S. dollars.



Electricity
110/220 volts AC.



Documents
Visitors to Belize must have a passport and a return or ongoing ticket. Citizens of the United States, Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom and most European countries do not need a visa.



Getting There
Three airlines offer flights from the United States to Philip S.W. Goldson International Airport in Ladyville, a 20-minute taxi ride from Belize City.

American Airlines (800-433-7300) offers flights from Dallas/Fort Worth and Miami. Continental (800-231-0856) flies from Houston, and the Central American carrier Taca Airlines (800-535-8780) offers flights from Houston, New Orleans, Miami, Los Angeles, New York Kennedy and Washington Dulles. Be sure to save US\$15 for the airport departure tax on your way home.

Getting Around

Because of unpredictable road conditions, the best way to get around Belize is often by plane, on one of the national carriers. Maya Airways (2-31348) offers the most extensive flight schedule with service to Belize International, Belize City Municipal Airport, San Pedro on Ambergris Caye, Corozal, Caye Caulker, Dangriga, Big Creek and Punta Gorda. Island Air (2-31140) and Tropic Air (800-422-3435) both offer flights to San Pedro on Ambergris Caye from Belize International and Belize City Municipal airports.

In Case of Emergency

The only recompression chamber in Belize is in San Pedro (2-62851).



For More Information
Moon Publications' *Belize Handbook*, by Chicki Mallan, is an indispensable resource for anyone traveling in the country, especially if you plan to leave the dive resort areas to explore. Ned Middleton's excellent *Diving Belize* (Aqua Quest Publications) is chock-full of site-specific diving info. Also check out the *Belize Online Tourism Guide* at www.belize.com. For more information, call the Belize Tourist Board in the U.S. at (800) 624-0686.

the best and most consistent visibility among the atolls. It also offers one of the healthiest and most abundant reef systems in the entire Caribbean.

DIVE SITES

The Blue Hole is almost perfectly circular opening measures nearly a quarter-mile across the sandy seafloor of the Lighthouse Reef lagoon. Don't expect lush reef life in this collapsed subterranean cave (with little water exchange, there's not enough oxygen to support much marine life), and don't expect long bottom times. Do expect a series of limestone ledges and overhangs and a tour of a monstrous cavern that features stalactites, stalagmites and limestone columns—some 20 feet tall—at 130 to 140 feet. Because of the depth and time limits, beginning and intermediate divers should stay away from the cavern.

► Because of its unique position on the reef, Half Moon Caye provides protection for the only sheltered site on the ocean side of any of the three atolls. Above water, Half Moon Caye is a natural monument, established in 1982 to protect the small island's population of red-footed boobies. Below water, **Half Moon Caye Wall** is one of the most spectacular dive sites in Belize. Starting at 15 feet, a vibrant shallow reef topped by staghorn and other hard corals drops down to a stretch of sand that is home to a populous colony of garden eels. Beyond the eels is a vertical outcropping of coral, the back side of the wall. Topping the crest, the bottom drops out and you'll find yourself on a wall that is beyond vertical in places and is punctuated by coral pinnacles. The top of the wall is crowded with angelfish, butterflies, blue tangs and large squirrelfish flitting among brain, star and lettuce corals. A little deeper you'll find Nassau grouper and below that, enormous jewfish. But turn toward the blue to find the guests of honor. Regular pelagic visitors include turtles, whitetip, blacktip, bull and lemon sharks, spotted eagle rays and the occasional manta.

► On the opposite side of the atoll, **Silver Caves** is named for tunnels filled with millions of silversides. And at a shallow site



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called the **Cathedral**, you'll find queen triggers, creole wrasse, green morays, azure vase and strawberry sponges more vivid than a stained-glass window.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The only resort on Lighthouse Reef is the **Lighthouse Reef Resort**, which offers air-conditioned cottages and cabanas on a private island with its own airstrip.

► Glover's Reef

Glover's Reef Atoll is the most overlooked of Belize's atolls, not because of any scarcity of great diving, but because it takes a little longer to get here. Although closer to the mainland than Lighthouse Reef, Glover's is farther from the dive boat and live-aboard docks in San Pedro and Belize City. In some ways, Glover's is the wild frontier of Belize diving.

The most southerly of Belize's atolls is nearly uninhabited and is circled by 40 miles of underexplored reef, including drop-offs to 2,000 feet and an 80-square-mile shallow lagoon with more than 700 patch reefs. Dolphins, turtles and spotted eagle rays can be seen year-round and from December to May, manta rays gather at **Manta Reef**. Two residents of Glover's

Reef—one benign, one not so benign—are as thick here as anywhere else in the world: boxy, pucker-lipped trunkfish below water and ravenous no-se-ums above water. Don't forget the bug spray.

DIVE SITES

The reeftop at Gorgonia's Gallery starts at 40 feet and the wall for which this site is named drops into the abyss, covered by a profusion of deepwater sea fans perched on the wall's edge filtering the current. Wide shingles of sheet coral cascade down the wall, tended by schools of creole wrasse, rainbow runners and big trunkfish.

► **At Hole in the Wall**, divers enter a tunnel often packed with silversides at 50 feet and exit onto a spectacular wall face at 80 feet.

► Chubby groupers and svelte barracuda come together on the wall at **Grouper Gulch**, along with turtles and nurse sharks.

► Another good site for searching out nurse sharks is the thicket of elkhorn and other hard corals at **Elkhorn Forest**. Also look for lobsters, moray eels and Nassau grouper on this shallow dive.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Manta Resort, at the southern end of the atoll, is your only option for full-service accommodations at Glover's Reef. Situated on a private 12-acre caye, the resort is a collection of private cabanas and a restaurant/bar built over the lagoon. Manta picks up guests in Belize City every Saturday for the two-and-a-half-hour ride to the atoll. It's about as away-from-it-all as you can get and still have electricity. Island Expeditions (800-667-1630), an adventure outfitter specializing in Belize travel, offers diving and camping expeditions to its base camp on Southwest Caye.

► Placencia

A hundred miles south of Belize City—a 40-minute plane ride—lies the breathtakingly short red-dirt runway of Placencia Peninsula, the last outpost of diving in Belize. Hanging like a loose thread from the mainland, the peninsula is scheduled to become an island during the next hurricane. It's (Continued on page 101)

GREG JOHNSTON

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Belize Diving Services (Caye Caulker)

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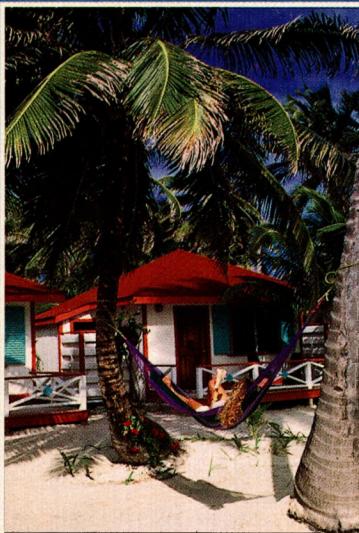
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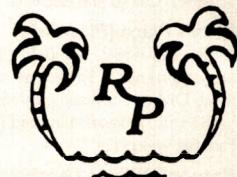
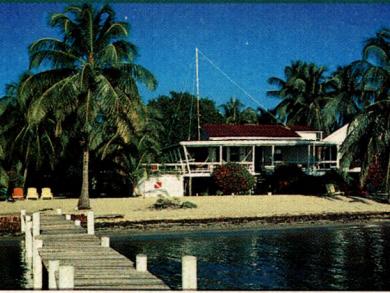
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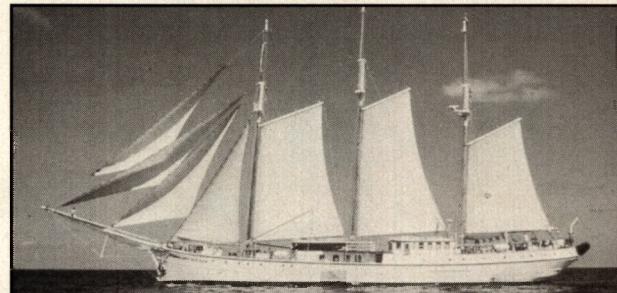
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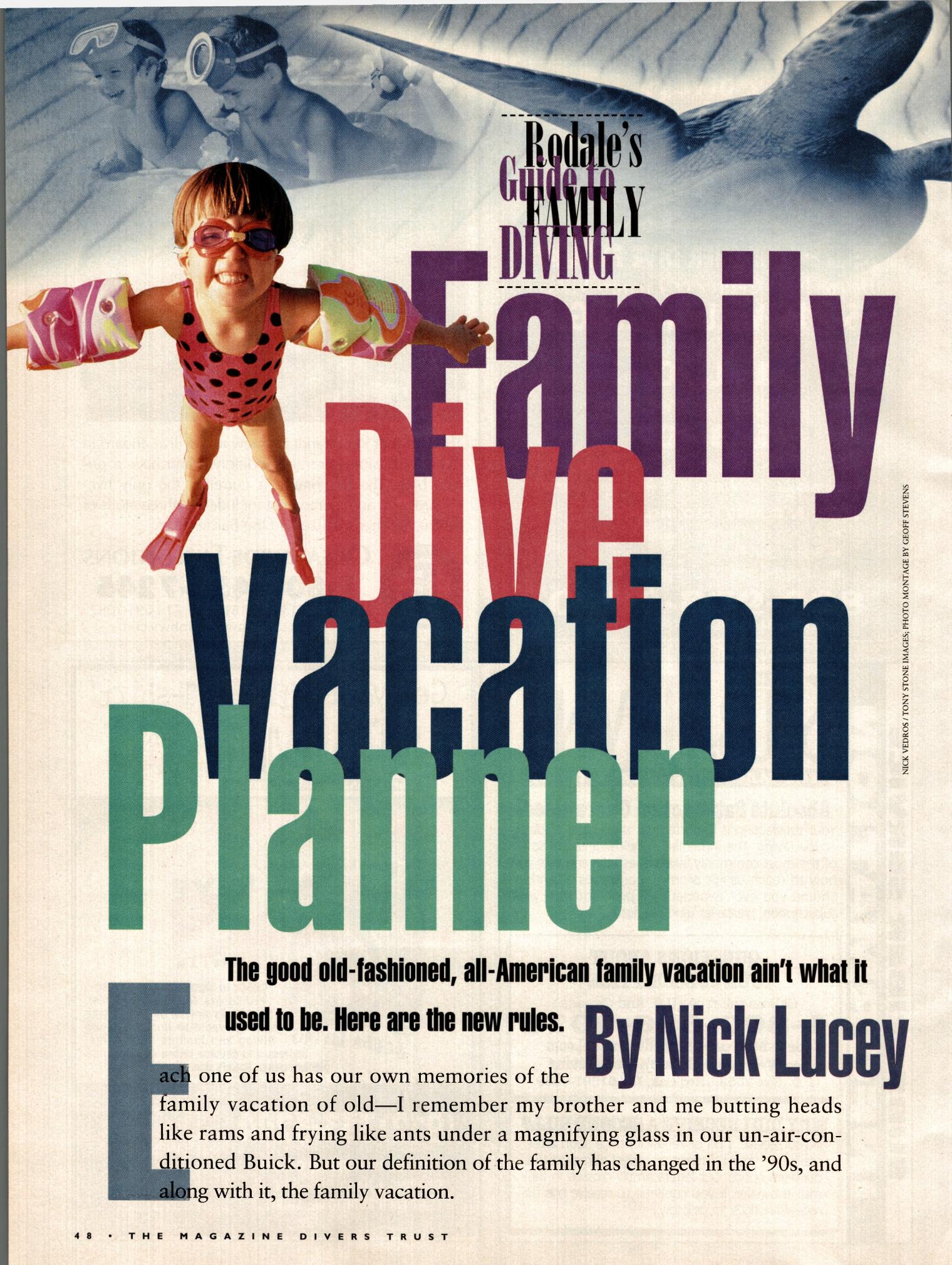


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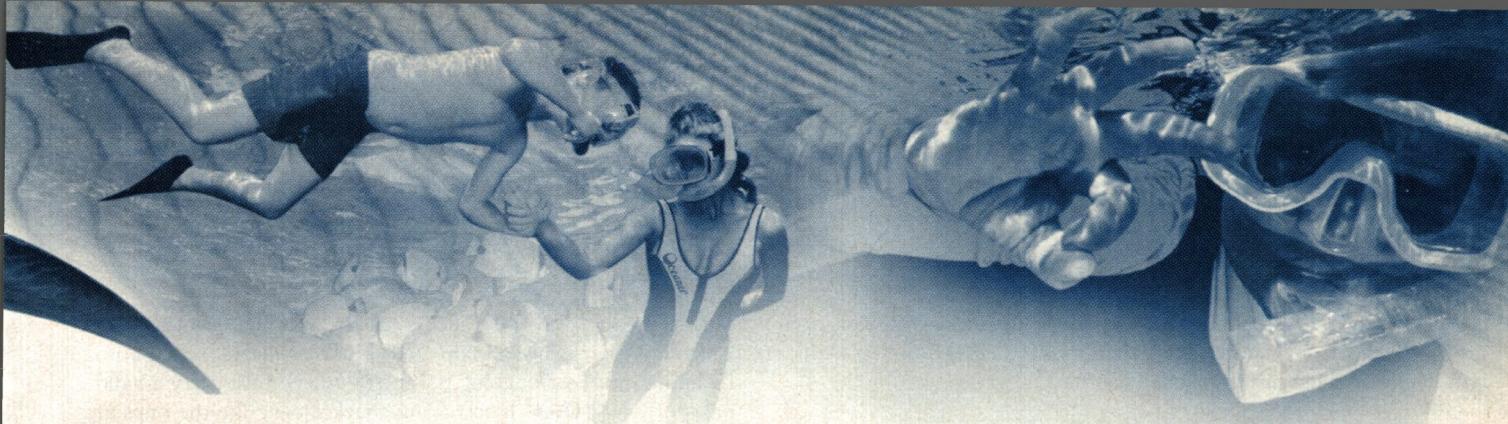
Family Dive Vacation Planner

NICK VEDROS / TONY STONE IMAGES; PHOTO MONTAGE BY GEOFF STEVENS

The good old-fashioned, all-American family vacation ain't what it used to be. Here are the new rules.

By Nick Lucey

Each one of us has our own memories of the family vacation of old—I remember my brother and me butting heads like rams and frying like ants under a magnifying glass in our un-air-conditioned Buick. But our definition of the family has changed in the '90s, and along with it, the family vacation.



Unfortunately, kids still fight when put together in a car, but air-conditioning is more prevalent and hand-held video games have reduced the head-butting. The station wagon is a rusting, antiquated icon, while the mini-van and jumbo jet cart us off to far-flung adventures. And for many families reading this magazine, the trip to Grandma's has been augmented by a trip to Grand Cayman.

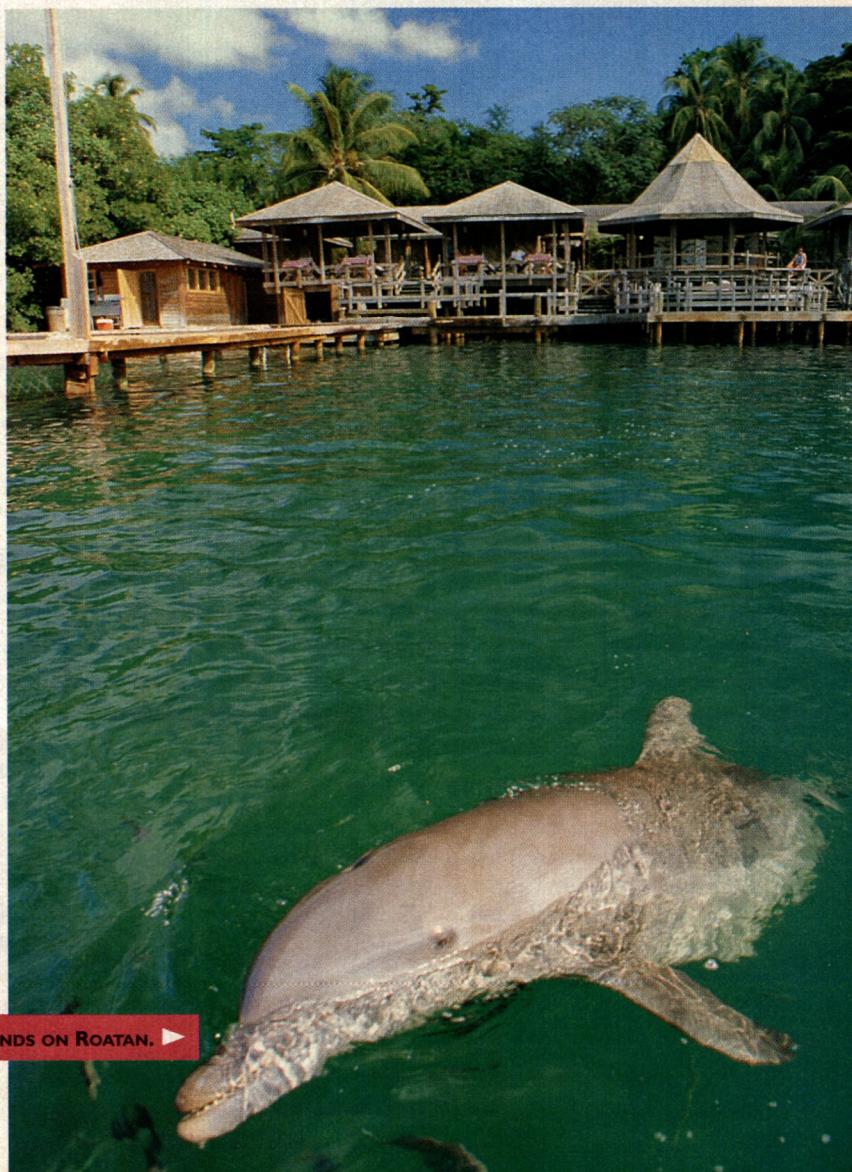
It's a big world out there, and getting the whole gang to agree on where to go is about as difficult as agreeing on who controls the remote. Here's where we can help. These family-friendly destinations and resorts were selected on the basis of two criteria: (1) great diving for adults and teens and (2) supervised activities for kids under 12. We can't, however, stop your kids from asking, "Are we there yet?"

Homes Away From Home

ARUBA

Location► Extreme southern Caribbean, 15 miles off Venezuela. **Flight time**► Two to two-and-a-half hours from Miami. **Weather**► Dry and sunny year-round, with little rainfall and constant trade winds. 90Fs in summer, 80Fs in winter. **Documents needed**► A valid passport or birth certificate. For U.S. citizens, a voter registration card with photo ID will work. **You'll love**► Wreck diving off some of the finest and longest beaches in the Caribbean. Aruba's first 18-hole golf course, Tierra del Sol, which opened last year. The new 46-shop mall and colorful nightlife of the capital Oranjestad. Casinos, casinos, casinos. **The kids will love**► Frolicking on the beach and collecting seashells. A voyage aboard an Atlantis submarine 150 feet below the surface. Bring a reef fish identification book

GREG JOHNSTON



THE KIDS CAN MAKE SOME NEW FRIENDS ON ROATAN. ▶



along for a great learning experience. And, if your kids aren't keen on snorkeling, have them hone their swimming skills or enroll them in windsurfing lessons.

Aruba Sonesta Resort & Casino

(800) SONESTA

The resort offers family packages that include breakfast, T-shirts, beach picnic on a private island and daily supervised children's activities for families with up to two children under 18. Water-sports packages through Red Sail Sports are also available.

ARUBA BEACHES: DON'T FORGET THE SUNBLOCK.



MARK M. LAWRENCE

Hyatt Regency Aruba

(800) 233-1234

Offers Camp Hyatt for kids with 25 percent off watersports, in addition to family packages with Red Sail Sports. Packages from \$615 per person, double occupancy.

La Cabana Beach Resort

(800) 835-7193

Club Cabana Nana caters to children ages five through 12. Activities include beach games, pool deck games and mini pool Olympics. One-week minimum for enrollment in the club.

BAHAMAS

Location► 50 miles off Florida's Atlantic coast. **Flight time**► Less than an hour from Florida. **Weather**► Summers can be hot and humid, in the 90Fs during the day. Winters are cool, in the 70Fs

during the day and 60Fs at night. **Documents needed**► U.S. and Canadian citizens need a copy of a birth certificate, legal photo ID and a return or ongoing ticket. All others must carry a valid passport. **You'll love**► Electrifying shark dives, like the ones at UNEXSO, Stuart Cove's and Stella Maris. Enjoying the casinos and glitzy nightlife on Nassau and Freeport, or letting time stand still on Out Islands beaches. **The kids will love**► Jean-Michel Cousteau's Out Islands Snorkeling Adventures, eco-oriented guided snorkeling excursions offered by more than 30 resorts on 10 islands. The aquariums of Coral Island, the Junkanoo Museum and dolphin encounters. The variety of children's programs at the major hotels on New Providence, Paradise Island and Grand Bahama. Resorts on Andros and Long Island offer activities for the kids and a slower pace for mom and dad.

Atlantis Paradise Island Resort and Casino

Paradise Island / (800) 321-3000

Camp Paradise caters to children ages five through 12. Full-day (\$45 per child), half-day (\$30) or nighttime (\$30) programs feature swimming, beachgoing, watersports, movies, games and cartoons. Kids under 17 stay free; tots under five eat free.

Bahamas Princess Resort & Casino

Grand Bahama / (800) 223-1818

Camp Seashells, for ages five and up, is complimentary in the morning, and \$15 per child in the afternoon and evening. Activities include volleyball, ping-pong, raft relay races, arts and crafts and water basketball. Clams on the Halfshell program also available for toddlers under five.

Club Med Eleuthera

Eleuthera / (800) CLUB-MED

This resort on Eleuthera caters primarily to families, with Baby Club for toddlers 12 to 23 months, Kids Clubs for children two to 11 years and a sailing school for ages six and up. Also offered is a "Scuba Experience" for ages four to seven and scuba diving in a "natural pool" at the marina for ages eight to 12.

Forte Nassau Beach Hotel

New Providence / (800) 327-8150, (954) 462-3400

Camp Funtastic includes play area, tree house, theatre, petting zoo, enclosed beach, swimming pool, learning center and soccer field for \$15 per child, per day. Kids under 12 stay free with two parents.

Lucayan Beach Resort

Grand Bahama / (800) 992-DIVE, (954) 351-9889

Free activities for kids include dance lessons, pool and beach games, mini Olympics and shell collecting. Children 12 and under stay free with their parents.

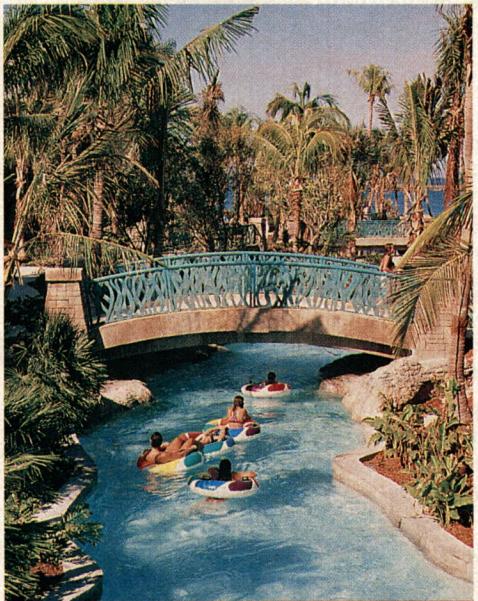
Nassau Marriott Resort & Crystal Palace Casino

New Providence / (800) 228-9290

The Marriotter Kid's Klub for kids ages two and up consists of daily supervised activities, including scavenger hunts, beach activities, and arts and crafts, as well as lunch and dinner. The cost is \$25 for the four-hour program (\$15 for each additional



child), \$30 for the eight-hour program (\$20 for additional children). Kids under 18 stay free.



BAHAMAS' RESORTS ARE FAMILY-FRIENDLY.

Nekton Pilot

**Live-aboard / (800) 899-6753,
(954) 463-9324**

Nekton offers free certification for anyone over 12, and kids 16 and under get 25 percent off their cruise fare. Onboard activities include snorkeling and swimming, kayaking, a jacuzzi, inner tube rides and watching videos. Evenings are dedicated to fun and educational presentations on fish and coral identification.

Paradise Island Fun Club

Paradise Island / (800) 952-2426

Kids 11 and under stay, play and eat for free when accompanied by two paying adults. Camp Fun Club is offered for kids, including activities like arts and crafts, movies, beach activities, dancing and, if they're not too young, free scuba lessons.

Pirate's Cove Holiday Inn

Paradise Island / (800) HOLIDAY

This Holiday Inn features the KidsSpree Vacation Club, offering daily activities for kids ages four through 11. Children under 19 stay in their parents' room free.

Radisson Cable Beach Casino and Golf Resort

New Providence / (800) 333-3333

One child stays and eats free with one adult member of the all-inclusive package. Camp Junkanoo offers daily entertainment for kids ages three through 12.

Small Hope Bay Lodge

Andros / (800) 223-6961

The resort offers nature- and outdoor-based activities for kids, including snorkeling, volleyball, bicycling, windsurfing, sailing, fishing and exploring. All-inclusive packages include complimentary scuba lessons for everyone aged 12 and up. Babysitting is free from 6 until 8:30 p.m.

Stella Maris

Long Island / (800) 426-0466

The resort offers Jean-Michel Cousteau's Out Islands Snorkeling Adventure for \$240 per person, and includes instruction, guidebooks, excursions, a set of fins, mask and snorkel. Children under three stay free. Also offered are villas and bungalows with reduced pricing on one- through four-week "self-catered" vacations.

BAY ISLANDS, HONDURAS

Location► Western Caribbean. **Flight time**► Two hours from Miami. **Weather**► Mild year-round, 90Fs in summer, 70Fs in winter. **Documents needed**► A valid passport. **You'll love**► The romantic seclusion of the outer islands, including Guanaja and Cayos Cochinos. Nature trails and secluded beaches, fishing on Utila. Well-established dive resorts and some of the lushest reefs in the Caribbean. **The kids will**

Planning

► **Good family vacations come to those who plan.** Planning your dive vacation carefully can make the difference between a lousy trip and a wonderful one. Include your children in the decision-making process and research. They will enjoy the vacation more as well as develop self-confidence.

► **Dig deeper.** When you've decided on a destination, find out more about the country and its culture as a family—whether it be through books, videos or by perusing the internet.

► **Enter the dive travel specialist.** If you're considering booking the trip through a dive travel specialist, call one before you decide where to go. A travel agent may provide insights, opinions and research materials that you might not have considered.

► **Think family.** Choose a destination that offers something for the whole clan—not just the grown-ups. A mix of historical attractions, tours, cultural events and sports will create an enjoyable, educational vacation. Save the one-palm-tree island for a romantic getaway with the significant other.

► **Try the one-flight theory.** If traveling with small children pushes your patience, consider islands that you can get to on a nonstop flight from a U.S. gateway city like Miami, Houston, New York or Los Angeles. Some one-flight destinations include Aruba, Bahamas, Bermuda, Bonaire, Cozumel, Grand Cayman, Oahu, Puerto Rico, Roatan and the Virgin Islands.

► **Single parents, double duty.** Don't make your first trip as a single parent to Micronesia. Start off close to home, then work your way to the Caribbean and beyond. When making reservations, ask about special family rates for parents traveling alone. To help share costs and provide company, consider traveling with another single-parent family or take a cruise.

► **Make some arrangements.** Make plans for child care programs and babysitting services when you make reservations. Find out who is providing the service, whether it's employees of the resort, child-care staff or contracted specialists. Ask about the resort's insurance, the staff's experience and their training in CPR.

► **Consider an all-inclusive resort.** There are some all-inclusive resorts that cater primarily to families. Destinations with a plethora of all-inclusives include Jamaica, the Lesser Antilles and the Dominican Republic. These family resorts offer activities geared toward both children and adults—all for one set price.

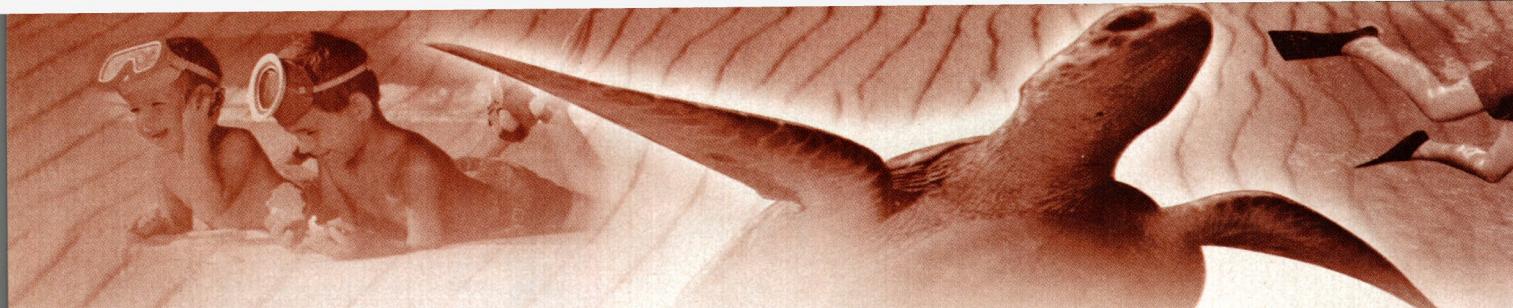
► **Consider condos or villas.** Villas are a good idea because of the freedom they afford. They are cost-effective for large families or for two families sharing one place. Villas with kitchens help your budget: self-prepared meals are cheaper than eating out, and tipping is optional.

► **Consider a cruise.** A growing number of cruise companies offer an array of scuba packages. This is a great way to get in some diving while ensuring that the kids are OK. Princess Cruises offers a New Waves program, which includes snorkeling instruction and PADI certification. Contact your travel agent..

► **Consider roughing it.** If your dive vacation plans include a road trip to destinations in the United States and Canada, think about camping to heighten the outdoor experience. (See "Camp 'N' Dive," page 29.)

► **Shop around.** Check for hotels that allow kids to stay free if they're under a certain age. Some resorts also have kids-eat-free programs.

► **Call ahead.** Some places require a minimum number of kids to enroll before they will operate their children's program at any given time. Call the hotel to check participation during your vacation dates. Enroll your kids in the program when making reservations.



love► The Institute of Marine Sciences' dolphin encounter, where you can snorkel with the bottlenosed variety at Bailey's Key on Roatan for \$75. Multi-day excursions to rain forest parks and whitewater rafting trips on the mainland.

Anthony's Key Resort

Roatan / (800) 227-3483

The resort offers a Summer Dolphin Camp in conjunction with the Institute for Marine Sciences for children ages eight to 14. Kids feed and pet dolphins, snorkel and participate in other activities. The cost is \$500 per child, per week. A babysitting service is available. Kids three and under stay free, and there's a special rate for those four through 11.

Bay Islands Beach Resort

Roatan / (800) 4-ROATAN

Kids under 6 eat and stay for free. Babysitting services are available.

Fantasy Island Resort

Roatan / (800) 676-2826

The resort offers discount children's rates; \$288 per child for a

four-night package, \$497 for seven nights. Ping-pong tables, basketball and tennis courts and swimming pool on site. Water-sports include sailing, windsurfing, jet skiing, kayaking and waterskiing. Babysitting services are available.

Utila Lodge

Utila / (800) 282-8932

Children under 12 get 50 percent off the all-inclusive package price. Unlimited babysitting costs \$60 per week, per child.

BERMUDA

Location► Western Atlantic, 650 miles southeast of Cape Hatteras, N.C. **Flight time►** Two hours from most East Coast gateway cities. **Weather►** Mid-80Fs during the day in summer to 70Fs at night. Daytime temps in winter in the 70Fs and the 50Fs at night. **Documents needed►** U.S. and Canadian visitors need proof of citizenship. All others need a passport. **You'll love►** Diving one of the greatest collections of shipwrecks (about 350 total) and northernmost coral reef systems in the western hemisphere. Pink-sand beaches. Tennis, deep-sea fishing and, according to the brochures, "more acreage dedicated to golf per square mile than anywhere else." **The kids will love►** The Bermuda Aquarium, Natural History Museum and Zoo, Crystal and Leamington Caves and the Bermuda Maritime Museum.

FRANKLIN VIOLA

Elbow Beach Hotel

(800) 223-7434

The hotel offers complimentary supervised activities for kids ages five through 12. Family packages include a glass-bottom boat ride and admission to the Maritime Museum and Aquarium. Call for rates.

Pompano Beach Club

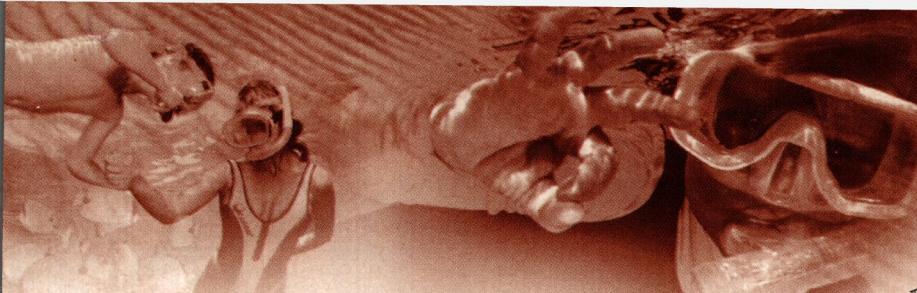
(800) 343-4155, (508) 358-7737

Family packages range from \$1,485 to \$2,080 for four nights, to \$3,705 to \$5,175 for 10 nights. Packages include accommodations for up to four people, full breakfast and five-course dinner daily, service charge, tax and one-day use of snorkeling equipment.

BONAIRE

Location► Southern Caribbean, 50 miles north of South America. **Flight time►** Two-and-a-half hours from Miami. **Weather►** Dry and sunny year-round, with little rainfall and constant trade winds. 90Fs in summer, 80Fs in winter. **Documents needed►** U.S. and Canadian visitors need proof of citizenship and a return ticket; all others need a passport. **You'll love►** Shore diving so easy that it will make you forget about the kids. Souvenir hunting and good restaurants in Kralendijk, Bonaire's quaint capital. Nightlife that consists of diving Town Pier with a flashlight. **The kids will love►** Washington-Slagbaai National Park, where they can see flamingos, parrots, iguanas and donkeys, all in an arid setting bristling with cacti. Family Month, celebrated





FRANKLIN VIOLE

every August by most resorts, with activities planned with families in mind. The Guided Snorkeling Program, open to all ages. Warahama Ranch, a dude ranch with petting zoo, playground, horse shows, picnic tables, horseback riding, mini museum and cactus garden.

Capt. Don's Habitat

(800) 327-6709, (305) 373-3331

Kids 12 and under stay free, ages 13 to 18 stay for half the adult price. Babysitting and villas with kitchens available.

Plaza Bonaire

(800) 766-6016

The Plaza Resort Bonaire offers a complimentary children's program for kids four through 12. The program, held Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, consists of watersports, arts and crafts and tours. Babysitters can also be arranged for US\$8 an hour.

Sand Dollar Condominium Resort

(800) 288-4773

Sand Dollar is about as family-oriented as they come, including multi-bedroom condos, free arts and crafts, pool games and movies for kids three through six, snorkeling and snorkeling certification for kids aged six through 15, and open-water certification at a discounted rate for kids ages 12 through 15. Activities for children also include marine biology-related classes. August is family month, with activities planned all month long.

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Location► Northeastern Caribbean, where the Greater and Lesser Antilles meet. **Flight time**► Two hours from Miami. **Weather**► Mid-70Fs in winter to mid-80Fs in summer. Trade winds cool down the evenings. **Documents needed**► U.S. and Canadian visitors need proof of citizenship and a return ticket; all others need a passport. **You'll love**► Diving the sites you choose at the pace you want from a charter boat that you sail. One of the Caribbean's most unspoiled destinations. Diving the *RMS Rhoen*, one of the world's most famous shipwrecks. **The kids will love**► Shell collecting along the beach at Long Bay and Beef Island. Exploring Fort Recovery or hiking Sage Mountain National Park, all on Tortola. A swim or snorkel at the Baths on Virgin Gorda and a climb to the top of Virgin Gorda Peak.

The Bitter End Yacht Club

Virgin Gorda / (800) 872-2392

This resort offers organized boating, snorkeling and sightseeing for children ages six through 16. A special family plan gives parents and kids two connecting rooms for the price of one.

Biras Creek Resort

Virgin Gorda / (809) 494-3555

Offers separate room for the kids at a discounted price when booking an all-inclusive vacation. Supervised activities for children six and up. The resort is self-contained, with a seaside pool, private beach and nature trails.

Little Dix Bay

Virgin Gorda / (800) 928-3000

The Children's Program is for ages three through 10 and includes activities such as nature walks, shell collecting, treasure



PASSPORT



United States

Packing and Preparing

► **Get your paperwork in order.** When traveling to countries where a passport is required, everyone needs one, regardless of age. Apply at least several months in advance.

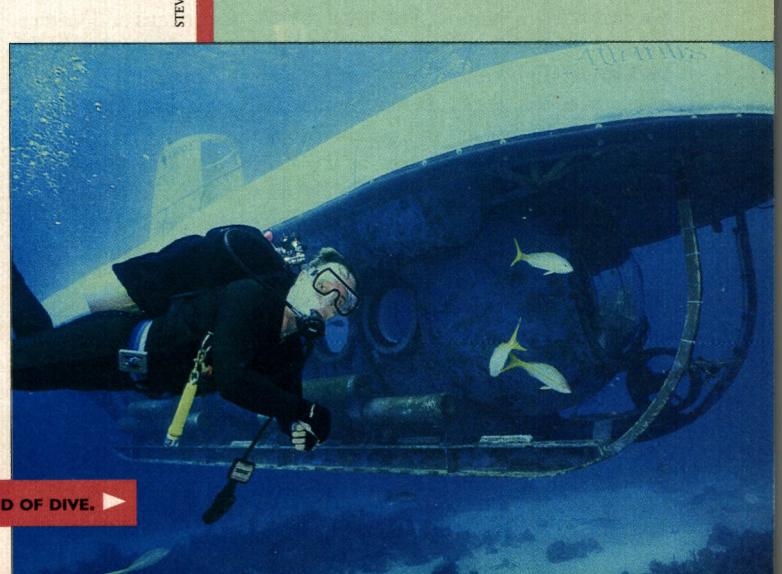
► **Get a clean bill of health.** It may be a good idea to get the whole family checked out with physical and dental exams prior to departure, especially when traveling outside the United States. The annual family vacation is a good excuse for your once-a-year appointments.

Ask your doctor what shots or immunizations you will need, if any. Some shots need to be administered weeks in advance, so find out early.

Prepare yourself for any medical emergency that may arise. Check into the health care system of the country or area you plan to visit. Find out if additional health insurance is necessary. Learn where the hospitals are in relation to your resort. (For more family vacation medical advice, see *Dive Medicine*, page 98.)

► **Get the goodies.** Using an old backpack or laundry bag, pack a sack full of toys and distractions for each kid, including a notebook and pencils for writing and drawing, books, cards, small dolls and toys, and a tape player with books on audiocassette. Also, don't forget to pack snacks for when kids start to get tired and cranky. Include low-mess, dry foods like pretzels, nuts, raisins, carrots, apples, cereal and crackers. You, your children and the people sitting next to you on the plane will thank you for it.

► **Hello there, sunshine.** You can forget to pack their favorite toys and games, but never forget the sunblock. This is one of the most important things that you bring along for the kids. The water-resistant stuff is recommended in strengths of SPF 15 and higher. Also, pack hats and light jackets.



ATLANTIS SUBS: A DIFFERENT KIND OF DIVE. ▶



hunts, stone painting, Caribbean folk art and literature, and musical instrument crafts. The program is \$35 per child, per day, or \$200 per week. A teen program is also available.

CAYMAN ISLANDS

Location► Northwestern Caribbean, between Cuba and Central America.

Flight time► An hour-and-a-half from Miami. **Weather**► Mild year-round. High 70Fs in winter to low 90Fs in summer.

Documents needed► U.S., Canadian and British visitors need proof of citizenship, photo ID and return ticket; all others need a passport. **You'll love**► Diving some of the most prolific walls in the Caribbean, including Little Cayman's Bloody Bay Wall. The choice of restaurants and bars on the Seven Mile Beach strip and in George Town. **The kids will love**►

Snorkeling and shell collecting on calm, shallow Seven Mile Beach. Kids of all ages will enjoy feeding the critters at Stingray City. A tour down the two-mile-long Mastic Trail, through woodlands two million years old. The Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park and the Cayman Museum. Pirate's Week, a celebration of the islands' seafaring heritage, held every October.

Hyatt Regency Grand Cayman

(800) 233-1234

The Hyatt, in conjunction with Red Sail Sports, offers a "Dive Into It" package, which offers accommodations, two-tank dives and one night dive. Also included are a sunset sail and round of golf.

COZUMEL

Location► Twelve miles off the Yucatan Peninsula.

Flight time► Two hours from Houston. **Weather**► 200 days of sun-

shine each year. Mid-70Fs in winter to the mid-80Fs in summer.

Documents needed► Americans and Canadians must have proof of citizenship, all others need a passport.

You'll love► High-voltage drift diving in strong currents over dramatic drop-offs. Fiestas in San Miguel, held every Friday and Saturday night. Palancar Wall, perched on a 3,000-foot drop-off and visibility that maxes out at 200 feet. **The kids will love**►

Chankanaab National Park, which offers a wildlife sanctuary, saltwater lagoon and a botanical garden with more than 400 species of tropical plants. Touring one of Cozumel's several small Mayan ruins. The Museum of Cozumel, which teaches kids about the island's cultural and natural history, and the Mexican Rodeo Show held on Wednesday nights at the Cozumel Arena.

Paradisus Cozumel

(800) 336-3542

The resort's children's program is for ages two to 12, and runs

from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3 to 5 p.m. daily. Activities include treasure hunts, ecological tours, mini Olympics, fish identification and sand castle building. Babysitting is also available.

CURAÇAO

Location► Southern Caribbean. **Flight time**► Two-and-a-half hours from Miami. **Weather**► Dry and sunny year-round, with little rainfall and constant trade winds. 90Fs in summer, 80Fs in winter. **Documents needed**► U.S. and Canadian visitors need proof of citizenship and a return ticket; all others need a passport.

You'll love► Diving the *Superior Producer* and 12.5-mile-long Curaçao National Underwater Park. The island's European flavor, and shopping and dining in bustling

UNWINDING AT CLUB MED ELEUTHERA.



Willemstad, capital of the Netherlands Antilles. Rolling the dice at a casino and rolling over on one of the island's 40 beaches. **The kids will love**► Touring the Amstel Brewery (the only one in the world that uses distilled salt water), the Curaçao Seaquarium & Underwater Animal Encounter, Hato Caves, the Queen Emma Bridge (the world's largest floating bridge), the Botanical Garden and Zoo, and hiking to the top of Mount Christoffel (1,230 feet) in Christoffel National Park.

Princess Beach Resort

(800) 9-DANCER, (305) 669-9391

The resort offers the free Teddy Bear program daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for kids ages three through 10. Supervised activities include arts and crafts, aerobics and sand castle building. Children under three are welcome if accompanied by an adult. Chil-



children under 19 stay free in their parents' room. Babysitting services are also available.

EASTERN CARIBBEAN

Location► A 500-mile-long chain of islands stretching from the Virgin Islands to South America. **Flight time**► Two to three hours from Miami. **Weather**► 70Fs in winter to 90Fs in summer. Expect brief tropical showers year-round. **Documents needed**► Varies by island. **You'll love**► The beaches, reefs and art galleries of Anguilla, St. Kitts' restored manor houses, St. Lucia's Soufrière Marine Management Area, Barbados' nightclubs and boutiques and eyeing the international jet set in Antigua. **The kids will love**► Viewing St. Kitts' prehistoric Carib rock drawings, Antigua's sugar plantations, hands-on national museum and summer carnival, the Mayoumba Folkloric Theatre on Anguilla, touring banana plantations on St. Lucia and Barbados' Wildlife Reserve replete with green monkeys, Barbados Museum and St. Ann's Fort.

Almond Beach Village

Barbados / (800) 4-ALMOND

The resort has recently built a Family Entertainment Center, and added a children's program. Supervised activities for kids up to age 18 include pool and beach games, sightseeing and arts and crafts. Babysitting is free during program hours.

Club Med St. Lucia

St. Lucia / (800) CLUB-MED

All-inclusive resort offers Kids Clubs for ages two through 11. Scuba Experience offered for children ages four through 11; horseback riding for kids eight and up.

Jack Tar Village St. Kitts Beach Resort & Casino

St. Kitts / (800) 999-9182

Children six and under (12 and under during low season) stay and eat free. Kids three through 12 can join Kids Klub, with sand castle building, scavenger hunts and other supervised activities.

Windjammer Landing Villas

St. Lucia / (800) 743-9609

Resort offers complimentary Just Us Kids program daily. Supervised activities include waterskiing lessons, beach hikes, arts and crafts, snorkeling and lunch daily.

FLORIDA KEYS

Location► Southern end of the Florida peninsula. **Flight time**► A two-hour flight from the Northeast to Miami, followed by a one- to four-hour drive, depending on whether you're going to the northern or southern Keys. **Weather**► Summers are hot and humid, often reaching the 90Fs. Winters are much cooler, with temps dropping into the 50Fs in the daytime. **You'll love**► The luxury and cost-efficiency of taking a road trip to a tropical dive destination. Budget-conscious motels and hotels. Camping at seaside state parks. **The kids will love**► Petting Flipper-wanna-bes at the Dolphin Research Center. The scenic vistas of the Overseas Highway. Bike rides and getting their picture taken at the southernmost point in the continental United States, in Key West. A detour to Disney World in Orlando on the drive down to the Keys.

Getting There

► **Think comfort.** Many airlines allow children under two years old to sit on your lap during the flight to avoid having to pay for another seat. While this might be a good idea for short flights, think about your comfort on longer flights cross-country and to the Caribbean.

► **Look around you.** Upon check-in at your resort, become familiar with the floor plan and fire exits. Brief your kids on fire as well as personal safety during the flight to your destination.

► **Safe and sound.** Safety deposit boxes in hotel lobbies and in-room safes with combinations that are set by the guest are generally safe. Don't use locking drawers in your room, as you never know how many sets of keys there are.

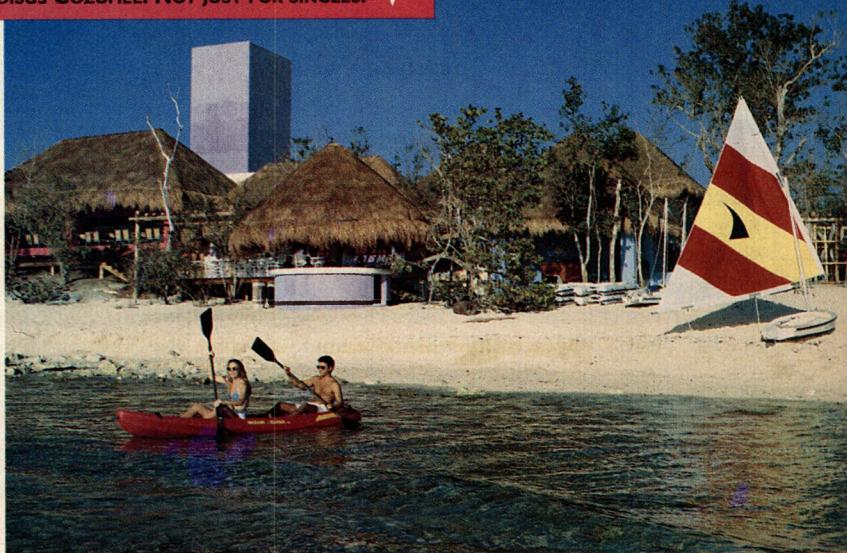
► **Don't lean on me.** Keep an eye on children around hotel balcony balustrades, as they are designed more to look nice than to support weight, especially in developing countries.

► **Don't be an accidental tourist.** Five thousand Americans die abroad each year. Most of these deaths are caused by injuries, chronic diseases, suicide and homicide, rather than infectious diseases. In fact, 53 percent are due to road accidents and 31 percent are due to trauma; less than 2 percent are caused by infections. Vacation doesn't mean taking a break from seatbelts, either. To further lower your family's risk, avoid mopeds and motorcycles, stay away from unscheduled flights that involve small aircraft and supervise your children in sports activities.

► **It's not easy being green.** Today, more than half a billion people travel, and by the year 2000, that number is expected to double.

Teaching your children to be environmentally aware lessens this massive impact. Nurture your children's appreciation for the marine and terrestrial world. Don't buy souvenirs that are made from endangered species, including coral products, avoid disposable items when traveling to developing countries as they are less prepared to handle waste disposal, and ensure that your family observes local regulations and customs.

PARADISUS COZUMEL: NOT JUST FOR SINGLES.





Cheeca Lodge

Islamorada / (800) 327-2888, (305) 664-4651

Camp Cheeca for kids ages six through 12 focuses on environmental awareness, and includes field trips to the Dolphin Research Center, coral reef state park and other points of interest.

Hawk's Cay Resort and Marina

Duck Key / (800) 432-2242, (305) 743-7000

Children's program includes snorkeling, educating kids about dolphins at on-site dolphin facility, catch-and-release fishing, water aerobics and lagoon olympics.



HAWAII

Location► Smack-dab in the center of the North Pacific, 2,000 miles from the West Coast. **Flight time**► Five hours from Los Angeles.

Weather► 80Fs during the day to high 60Fs and low 70Fs at night, year-round. November through March are the wettest months, while September is hottest. **You'll love**► Diving with more than 450 marine species, 30 percent of which are found nowhere else on earth. For West Coast divers, water temperatures that thankfully don't require at least a quarter-inch wetsuit. Lava tubes, caves, tunnels and caverns. Touring Pearl Harbor and visiting the *USS Arizona*. **The kids will love**► Snorkeling and feeding the fish at Oahu's Hanauma Bay. Learning how to windsurf in Maui. Helicopter tours of volcanoes and waterfalls. Chilling out and surfing on miles

and miles of beach. Experiencing a traditional Hawaiian luau.

Backpackers Vacation Inn

Oahu / (808) 638-7838

The Inn offers beachfront studio apartments and two- and three-bedroom cabin rentals for families, with dive packages available. Families get free use of kayaks, bodyboards, and snorkel equipment, plus discounts on local attractions.

Hilton Waikoloa Village

Hawaii / (800) 445-8667

The Hilton and Red Sail Sports offer a package for \$3,030 that includes accommodations, daily rental car, and vouchers

◀ HAWAII'S VERSION OF THE PETTING ZOO.

for activities, including tennis, golf, spa, snorkel cruise and a day for kids five through 12 at Camp Menehune. For two vouchers, you can get a 45-minute helicopter tour.

Outrigger Resorts

(800) OUTRIGGER

Outrigger's one- and two-bedroom condominium rates on Maui and Kauai run from \$105 to \$235 per night. The Free Ride program entitles you to a rental car at no extra charge. With the Family Plan, kids 17 and under stay free.

PUERTO RICO

Location► Between the Atlantic and Caribbean; at the eastern end of the Greater Antilles archipelago. **Flight time**► Two hours from Miami. **Weather**► 70Fs in winter to high 80Fs in summer. The island is wetter

DAVID FLEETHAM

in the northeast, more arid in the southwest. **Documents needed**► None. **You'll love**► Diving the Caribbean without a passport. Taking a walking tour of Old San Juan, the second oldest European settlement in the Western Hemisphere and oldest under the American flag. **The kids will love**► Discovering the varied landscape, from sandy beaches to the only rain forests in the U.S. forest service to the island's curious limestone karst. The Children's Theater and Children's Museum, both in San Juan. Going to a *beisbol* game.

El Conquistador

Las Croabas / (800) 468-5228

The resort's program costs \$38 per child, per day, and includes a



lunch and snack. The program, for kids ages five through 12, runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Supervised activities include kayaking, pool, tennis and sand castle building. Children under 16 stay free. Babysitting services are available.

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Location► In the northeastern Caribbean, at the northern end of the Lesser Antilles. **Flight time**► Two hours from Miami. **Weather**► Mild, with temperatures hovering in the 80Fs year-round. **Documents needed**► U.S. and Canadian visitors need proof of citizenship, all others require a passport. **You'll love**► The quaint dockside village of Cruz Bay on St. John, diving the 400-foot wreck of the *WIT Shoal* off St. Thomas and St. Croix's walls, bristling with enormous filter feeders. The shopping, restaurants and nightlife of Charlotte Amalie and Christiansted. **The kids will love**► The Coral World Marine Park and Underwater Observatory on St. Thomas, hiking through the rugged beauty of the Virgin Islands National Park on St. John and touring the historic homes and forts of St. Croix's Danish days.

Buccaneer Hotel, St. Croix

St. Croix / (800) 223-1108

In the summer, children 12 and under sharing a room with their parents stay free; in the winter it's an additional \$10. The resort offers a complimentary Pirate's Playhouse in summer for ages five through 12 from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Babysitting services are available.

Caneel Bay

St. John / (800) 928-8889

Kids' activities include beach games and equipment, windsurfing lessons, kayak tours and snorkeling. All kids four and under need to be accompanied. Children under 16 stay free when sharing a room with their parents; children under five eat free and over 12 eat for half price. Babysitting services are available.

Chenay Bay Beach Resort

St. Croix / (800) 548-4457

Children under 18 stay free, and kids under 12 eat free. From June through August, complimentary supervised activities are available for kids ages three through 12 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and include beach and pool games, tennis, beachcombing and scavenger hunt. Babysitting services are available. All units are cottages with kitchenettes.

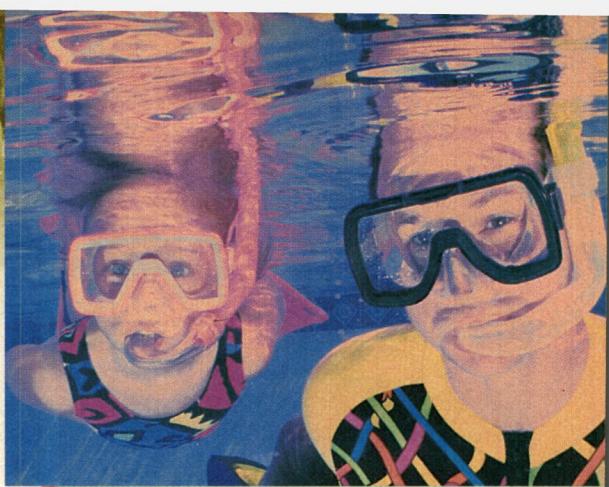
Sapphire Beach Resort and Marina

St. Thomas / (800) 524-2090

Kids 12 and under stay and eat free with their parents. The resort's complimentary Kids Club begins Feb. 1, 1997. Babysitting is available.

FOR MORE INFO

- Travel With Your Children (TWYCH) publishes its *Family Travel Times* 10 times a year for \$55 and offers a call-in service for subscribers. Write to TWYCH at 45 W. 18th St., 7th Floor, New York, NY 10011 or call (212) 477-5524.
- America Online (AOL) boasts a Family Travel Network in the travel portion of the online service. The Network provides tips, features packages and provides phone numbers to resorts that are geared towards families. Also, AOL's Scuba Forum (keyword: scuba) contains a family dive travel folder with posted questions and answers.
- Use your favorite search engine and surf the World Wide Web for family vacation-related web sites. Your family will have fun on the internet while you research your next dive trip.



MARK M. LAWRENCE

Lochin

Camp Getcha-in-de-watta: Instructional Dive and Snorkel Programs for Kids and Teens

A growing number of destinations offer professional snorkeling and scuba instruction especially for children, either through organizations devoted to education or through their own homegrown programs. A sampler:

► **Jean-Michel Cousteau's Bahama Out Islands Snorkeling Adventures.** More than 30 resorts on 10 islands in the Bahamas participate in this ambitious program for children and adults. The package includes snorkeling instruction by trained professionals, three guided excursions, a snorkeling instruction book, the *Snorkeling Guide to Marine Life* by Paul Humann and a gift set of U.S. Divers snorkeling gear. Contact: Bahama Out Islands Promotion Board at (800) OUT-ISLANDS or fax (954) 359-8098.

► **Bonaire Guided Snorkeling.** Long acknowledged for its innovative marine protection programs, 12 of Bonaire's famed shallow reefs have been mapped and photographed for snorkelers. Bonaire's dive operators offer classroom and open-water snorkeling instruction, dedicated snorkeling boats and marine education programs. Contact: Tourism Corporation Bonaire at (800) 826-6247 or on the Internet at <http://www.interknowledge.com/bonaire>.

► **Aqua-Camp & Diving Academy** conducts summer snorkel and diving camps in Panama City, Fla., and Nassau, Bahamas. The snorkeling program (ages 10 and older) emphasizes marine biology and ecology. Children 12 and older can earn scuba certification. Parents invited to attend. Prices start at \$474, including accommodations, meals and transportation. Contact: Aqua-Camp & Diving Academy at (770) 964-9368.

► **Broadreach Summer Adventure Programs for Teenagers.** Unique, highly regarded programs for ages 13 to 19 challenge young adults "to reach beyond self-imposed limitations" and gain greater insight into themselves and their world. Adventures to the Turks & Caicos, Red Sea, St. Martin, St. Kitts and Antigua. Programs require a minimum of three weeks and begin at \$2,400. Contact: Broadreach, (919) 833-1907 or fax (919) 833-2129.

Why is Diamond the perfect resort for families?



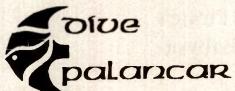
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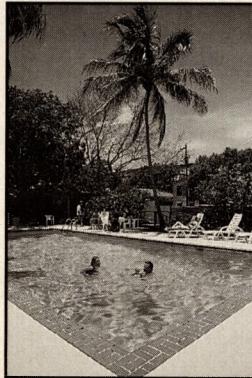
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READER RATINGS



AUSTRALIA & THE BAY ISLANDS

They are two of the most popular dive destinations in their respective hemispheres, and they are revered by divers for the health of their reefs and biodiversity. One destination contains the longest, largest barrier reef in the world, Australia's Great Barrier Reef, the only living thing on Earth visible from the moon. The second is Honduras's Bay Islands, with some of the richest and most diverse coral communities in the Caribbean.

In fact, our readers gave these destinations scores of better than 4 for the health of their reefs. The Bay Islands received a 4.38 for them, while individually, Roatan fared slightly better and Utila and Guanaja a bit lower. Australia received an overall score of 4.55, while Queensland outshined the national average.

All areas fared well in their value

for diving dollar and overall score. Touted by travel guides as one of the cheapest places on Earth to get certified, Utila was the big winner in value, with a 4.65, trailed by Roatan and the Bay Islands overall. Perhaps higher prices due to popularity was the reason our readers gave Queensland a slightly lower score for value than the Australian average. In overall scores, however, the two are equal, with a 4.62 for Queensland and 4.64 for all of Australia. Utila received the highest overall score in the Bay Islands with a 4.24, followed by Roatan.

Australia and Queensland also fared well in fish life, with a 4.60 and 4.57, respectively. Roatan's walls have a devout following, too, scoring a 4.39, while Utila received a 4.18 and the Bay Islands averaged 4.27.

On the Web

For more information on diving in **Australia** and the **Bay Islands**, see the travel index on RSD's site on the World Wide Web:

<http://www.scuba-diving.com/>

READER RATINGS



Reader Ratings Bay Islands (overall)



Reader Ratings Guanaja



Reader Ratings Roatan



How We Got the Numbers

Reader rating forms were included in seven past issues, and were available to all readers, postage-paid. Ratings reflect the average scores on a scale of one to five:

- 1 = poor**
- 2 = below average**
- 3 = good**
- 4 = above average**
- 5 = excellent**

Dive Operators and Live-aboards

Dive operators were rated in seven categories:

- **Friendliness of staff**
- **Staff's willingness to let you manage your own profiles**
- **Staff's knowledge and**

selection of dive sites

► **Quality of boats** Reader raters gave dive boats three separate scores, one each for condition of boat, space on board to gear up and amenities on the boat. These scores were averaged for a single "quality of boats" score.

- **Rental gear**
- **Facilities**
- **Value for diving dollar**

Live-aboards were rated in these categories (except rental gear and facilities), plus photography services.

Bay Islands Dive Operators Anthony's Key Resort

ROATAN
(800) 227-3483, (305) 666-1997
4.43 friendliness of staff
4.38 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile

- 4.49** staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
- 3.69** quality of boats
- 4.07** rental gear
- 4.23** facilities
- 4.40** value for diving dollar

Bay Islands Beach Resort

ROATAN
(800) 4-ROATAN, (407) 624-5774
4.42 friendliness of staff
4.17 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
4.29 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
2.92 quality of boats
2.92 rental gear
3.83 facilities
4.25 value for diving dollar

Bayman Bay Club

GUANAJA
(800) 524-1823, (954) 572-1902
4.44 friendliness of staff
4.25 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
4.11 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
3.39 quality of boats
3.33 rental gear



DIVING WITH DOLPHINS IS A POPULAR WAY TO SPEND SOME BOTTOM TIME IN THE BAY ISLANDS.

GREG JOHNSTON

Reader Ratings Utila



4.11 facilities
3.72 value for diving dollar

CoCo View Resort

ROATAN

(800) 282-8932, (352) 588-4131

4.67 friendliness of staff
4.65 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
4.58 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
3.98 quality of boats
4.28 rental gear
4.77 facilities
4.67 value for diving dollar

Fantasy Island Beach Resort

ROATAN

(800) 676-2826, (011) 504-45-1191

4.40 friendliness of staff
4.54 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
4.06 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
3.39 quality of boats
3.87 rental gear
3.94 facilities
3.97 value for diving dollar

Reader Ratings Australia (overall)



4.11 facilities
3.72 value for diving dollar

4.82 friendliness of staff
4.09 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
4.55 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
4.15 quality of boats
4.00 rental gear
4.64 facilities
4.82 value for diving dollar

Reef House Resort

ROATAN

(800) 328-8897, (210) 681-2888

4.10 friendliness of staff
4.40 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
4.11 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
3.69 quality of boats
3.88 rental gear
4.10 facilities
4.22 value for diving dollar

Romeo's Resort

ROATAN

(800) 535-DIVE, (011) 504-45-1127

4.88 friendliness of staff

Reader Ratings Queensland



4.81 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
4.56 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
3.50 quality of boats
3.86 rental gear
3.87 facilities
4.67 value for diving dollar

Seagrape Plantation

ROATAN

(800) 298-9009, (011) 504-45-1717

4.70 friendliness of staff
4.50 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
4.60 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
4.02 quality of boats
4.60 rental gear
4.40 facilities
4.70 value for diving dollar

Utila Lodge Resort

UTILA

(800) 282-8932, (011) 504-45-3143

4.83 friendliness of staff
4.91 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
4.83 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
4.16 quality of boats
4.33 rental gear

READER RATINGS

4.58 facilities
4.75 value for diving dollar

Live-aboards

Bay Islands

Aggressor

(800) 348-2628, (504) 385-2628

4.77 friendliness of staff
4.92 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
4.67 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
4.59 quality of boats
4.56 photography services
4.31 value for diving dollar

Peter Hughes/ Wind Dancer

(800) 9-DANCER, (305) 669-9391

4.55 friendliness of staff
4.91 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
4.17 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
4.85 quality of boats
4.82 photography services
4.36 value for diving dollar

Resorts

Anthony's Key Resort

ROATAN

(800) 227-3483, (305) 666-1997

3.67 restaurant
4.34 staff
4.31 value

CoCo View Resort

ROATAN

(800) 282-8932, (352) 588-4131

4.50 restaurant
4.55 staff
4.85 value

Fantasy Island Beach Resort

ROATAN

(800) 676-2826, (011) 504-45-1191

4.58 restaurant
3.68 staff
3.93 value

Queensland

Live-aboards

Mike Ball/ Spoilsport

(800) 952-4319, (011) 6177-723022

4.80 friendliness of staff
4.53 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
4.80 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
4.75 quality of boats
4.46 photography services
4.47 value for diving dollar

Mike Ball/ Supersport

(800) 952-4319, (011) 6177-723022

4.71 friendliness of staff
4.47 staff's willingness to let you manage your own profile
4.71 staff's knowledge and selection of dive sites
4.61 quality of boats
4.44 photography services
4.47 value for diving dollar

More Dive Operators

The following operators did not receive enough responses for their ratings to be included:

BAY ISLANDS

Doc's Dive Shop
Roatan
(011) 504-45-1322

Laguna Beach
Resort
Utila
(800) 668-8452,
(318) 893-0013

Off the Wall Divers
and Ecosports
Roatan
(800) 315-2613
(011) 504-45-5525

Plantation
Beach Resort
Cayos Cochinos
(800) 628-3723
(011) 504-42-0974

Sunrise Roatan
Roatan
(800) 934-DIVE

(011) 504-45-1265

Utila Reef Resort
Utila
(800) 263-9876
(011) 504-261-7368

QUEENSLAND

Adventure Sports
Brisbane
(011) 6173-3913766

Don Cowie's
Reef Services
Cairns
(011) 6170-311588

Heron Island
Dive Shop
Heron Island
(011) 6179-781488

Lizard Island Lodge
Lizard Island
(011) 6170-603999

Nautilus
Scuba Centre
Brisbane
(011) 6178-571440

Ocean Spirit Cruises
Cairns
(011) 6170-312920

Port Douglas
Dive Centre
Port Douglas
(011) 6170-995327

Pro Dive Brisbane
Brisbane
(011) 6173-3683766

Quicksilver
Diving Services
Port Douglas
(011) 6170-995050

Tusa Dive
Connection
Cairns
(011) 6170-311248

More Live-aboards

The following live-aboards did not receive enough responses for their ratings to be included:

BAY ISLANDS

Isla Mia
Roatan
(800) 874-7636,
(409) 765-1776

QUEENSLAND

Anaconda II
Airlie Beach
(011) 6179-4677446

Auriga Bay II
Manunda
(011) 6170-581408

Elizabeth E II
Mackay
(011) 6179-574281

Esperance Star
Milton
(011) 6173-3683766

Nimrod III
Cairns
(011) 6170-315566

Pacific Star
Whitsunday
(011) 6179-466383

Pro-Dive
Townsville
Townsville
(011) 6177-211760

Reef Explorer
Cairns
(011) 6170-939113

Rum Runner I
Rum Runner III
Cairns
(011) 6170-521088

S/V Atlantic
Clipper

Cairns
(011) 6170-311288

Kalinda/
Stella Maris/
Pro Dive Cairns
Cairns
(011) 6170-315255

Taka II
Taka III
Cairns
(011) 6170-518722

Undersea Explorer
Cairns
(011) 6170-514777

Watersport/
Mike Ball
Dive Expeditions
Townsville
(800) 952-4319
(011) 6177-723022

Rodale's
Guide to
FAMILY
DIVING

Family Dive Gear

When it comes to your family, are fit, comfort and safety too much to ask for? We asked, and here's what we found.

o a head count on any resort's dive boat these days and you'll see the same thing we do—families. Men and women, married and un-, kids and grandparents.

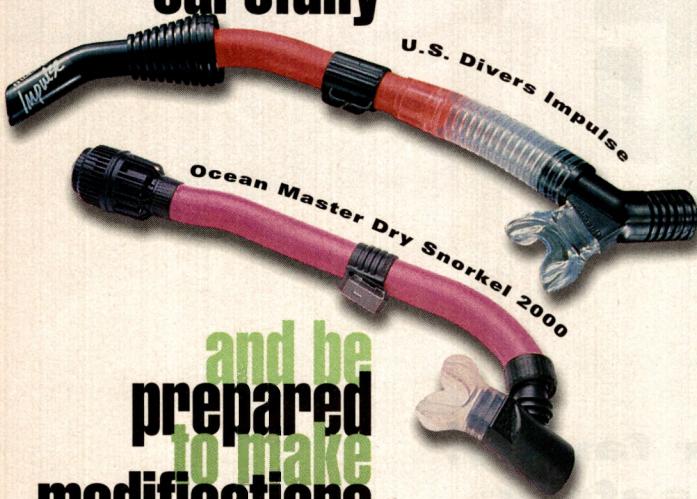
Mike Nelson is history. Scuba is as mainstream as shopping malls, embracing a crazy quilt mixture of ages, sizes, lifestyles and physical abilities. All aspects of our sport, from training courses and resort programs to marketing efforts, are in the process of adjusting to this fundamental shift from a sport for the single male to a recreational activity for the modern family: a group of people related to each other by birth, marriage or simply choice.

And there's the rub: Dive gear, which makes our sport possible, where fit and comfort are essential to performance and safety, is still in most instances designed for the prototype male diver. Not good. Today's diverse scuba divers bring with them a diversity of differences:

**A SCUBALAB SPECIAL REPORT
by JON HARDY**



Family shoppers will have to choose gear carefully



and be prepared to make modifications to meet special needs.

- Females have different body shapes, inherent buoyancy and muscular strength; often their reasons for diving differ from men's.
- Young people are smaller, yet still growing, further complicating the fit equation.
- Older people usually experience a decrease in fitness, strength and flexibility with age, and can be more prone to physical and mental stress.
- Sedentary people have less strength and flexibility, are often overweight and can have difficulty breathing effectively.
- Physically handicapped divers have specific limitations.

No doubt about it: Dive equipment manufacturers are increasingly sensitive to the array of human differences that scuba equipment must accommodate. But it's a long road from engineer's computer to company test lab and finally to retail store shelf.

In the meantime, here's what we found when we shopped for dive gear for the whole family. There are a few items designed specifically for the nontraditional diver, but for the most part, the family shopper will have to choose carefully and be prepared to modify current gear to meet special needs. Suggestions for doing so will be found under each category of gear below.

Masks Selection

Only by buying a mask (and other dive gear) at a professional dive store can you ensure the quality and performance you need. Proper fit is another matter. No instructor or store personnel can pick a properly fitting mask for you. Only you can. Follow these steps and try on lots of masks, gradually narrowing them down to the one that not only fits properly but also feels most comfortable.

1. Look straight up and gently place the mask on your face without using the strap or inhaling. It should rest evenly on your face with no gaps. Have someone else check for gaps.
2. Place a regulator or snorkel mouthpiece in your mouth. Does the mask still feel like it fits? Any major gaps yet?
3. Now the classic test: Without using the strap, place the mask on your face while looking forward. Gently inhale. The mask should stay in place. A strong inhale will close minor leak areas and is not a valid test.
4. Repeat the sniff test with mouthpiece.
5. If a mask is still in the running, adjust its strap and put it on. The nose pocket should not touch your nose.
6. Repeat test with the mouthpiece. How easy will it be to equalize?
7. After you've narrowed your choice to one or two masks, try using them under actual conditions.

Modifications

- Many women and children prefer to replace the silicone strap or add to it with cloth or nylon straps, which slip on and off more easily and with less hair pulling. The Slap Strap by Innovative Scuba Concepts is probably still the best of these.
- For those without 20/20 eyesight, masks with interchangeable eyepieces allow you to insert lenses for your individual needs. However, many prefer to dive with contact lenses so that vision is maintained when the mask is removed.

Usage Hints

- For beginning divers and snorkelers, keep the mask simple—low volume, no purge valve, a single lens.





U.S. Divers Elan



**Gearing Up
The Family**



Scubapro MK250-G250



IDI Power Fin



► Follow manufacturer's directions to clean new masks before first use and periodically as chemicals from sunscreens, makeup, etc. coat the inside. Commercial cleansers come with many masks or may be purchased at a dive store. Most toothpastes and Soft Scrub also work well.

► For defogging before each dive, spit is not adequate for modern silicone masks. Besides commercial defoggers (see "Spit

or Squirt?" RSD, Jan./Feb. '96), diluted dishwashing soaps work well but need thorough rinsing to prevent eye irritation. Baby shampoo also works with less irritation. Both are inexpensive, readily available and useful in other ways.

► Leave gloves off until after mask is on so you can use fingers to assure no hair or the lip of your hood is under the mask skirt, preventing a good seal.

► Masks leak for reasons other than poor fit, including being adjusted too tightly. The purpose of the strap is to hold the mask in place, not to provide a watertight seal.

What to Buy

Dacor has earned a good reputation for masks of lower volume that fit the smaller or narrower face.

One of the best small masks we've found is Kid's Force, made by a relatively unknown company, Sterling USA.

The new lookdown masks by Mares (Esa) and Oceanic (Bivu 2 and 4) allow divers to see their waists and instruments.

For those divers who may be concerned with claustrophobia, clear or white silicone skirts that let in lots of light, and side windows may help, though some divers are distracted by the distortion of side windows. Consider Beuchat Maximo II; Dacor Integra, Pursuit and Trivista; Oceanic Miniprismatic; Scubapro Tri-Vent, XQ and Quad Vision; Sea Quest Tetra; and U.S. Divers Hawaii series.

Snorkels Selection

Snorkels come in a confusing variety of

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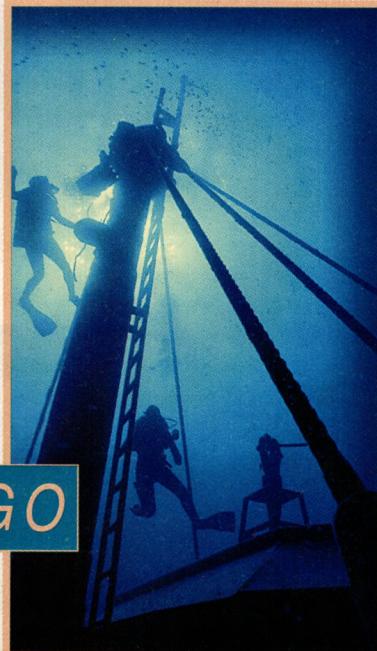
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(232-3483)

sizes, shapes and lengths. Here are some key points to remember when selecting a snorkel:

► Smaller divers can use snorkels with smaller diameters, while larger divers need the "big bore" snorkels. The diameter of a snorkel determines how much volume of air can be moved through it; therefore, a big person with bigger lungs, needs a larger diameter.

► The snorkel should point up when your head is down in the normal swimming position and should be at least several inches above your head.

► Various fittings at the top of the snorkel keep water out ("dry airway devices"), but increased weight, drag and wobble in the water, and breathing

A Few Words About...

Dive Computers—Serve multiple purposes for families: ♦ To build in a realistic safety factor for family members who are older, younger or more sedentary than the norm; ♦ To help those who never developed full proficiency with dive tables; ♦ To configure easily with rental gear by clamping to a hose or BC or strapped on the wrist. ♦ Among the best family dive computers are those that have graphic nitrogen loading bars highlighted by green, yellow and red zones: Oceanic Prodigy, Sherwood Resource and U.S. Divers Matrix. ♦ Excellent family computers with digital displays include: Orca Marathon, Sea Quest Companion, TUSA Imprex and UWATEC Aladin Sport.

Protective Suits—Most divers and snorkelers should make greater use of protective suits. They help prevent heat loss, sunburn, scrapes, cuts, gear chafing, marine life stings, and provide a reserve of buoyancy. ♦ Women wanting a good fit have two choices: a lot of shopping or custom suits. Manufacturers who specialize in children's wetsuits are Bare, Beuchat, Body Glove, Dacor and Deep See.

resistance must be considered.

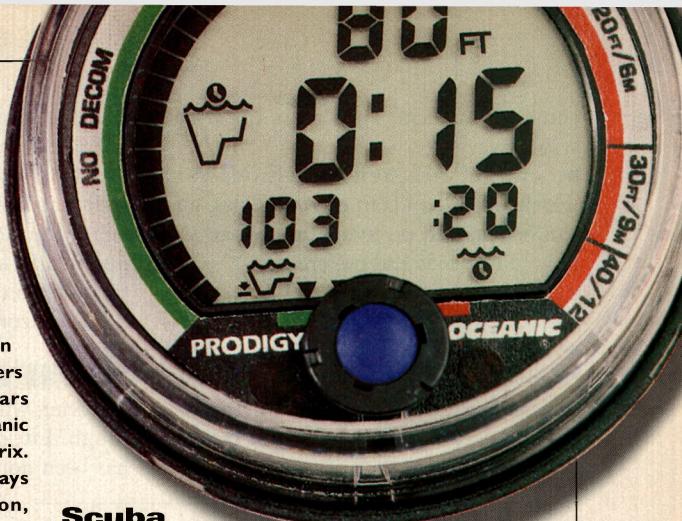
► A snorkel must fit comfortably in your mouth; therefore swiveling mouthpieces and easily adjustable mask attachments are valuable.

Scuba Cylinders

The standard aluminum 80 is not necessarily appropriate for all family members. By calling ahead to the operator you plan to dive with, you can often arrange for smaller or larger tanks. Sizes from 50 to 100 cubic feet are common. ♦ Smaller divers and many women use less air and do not need to be burdened with tanks that make their diving more difficult. ♦ Larger divers use more air and, with the right size tank, should not have to cut their dives short due to lack of air.

Modifications

► Snorkelers with braces or bands on their teeth or an unusual bite may need to modify the snorkel's mouthpiece by using a razor blade or nail file to carefully



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3 Days Boat Diving
9/1/96-12/20/96

7 Nights

\$429



8 Days/7 Nights
5 Days Boat Diving
9/1/96-12/20/96

remove material that rubs them the wrong way.

► Snorkel attachment methods vary widely, from bands to clips to slides, and can be changed on many snorkels to suit individual needs and preferences.

Usage Hints

► After clearing a snorkel that's been filled with water, it's best to take a slow, careful breath and use your tongue as a splash guard in case some water remains behind.

► If the snorkel continually leaks, check the non-return on the purge valve for damage or loose fittings.

► If water is entering the snorkel due to heavy surface chop, change your head position to keep the purge at the lowest point or so that the top of the snorkel is more horizontal to the surface.

What to Buy

Knowing what to look for in a snorkel is tough. Little or no independent testing has been done on the usefulness and per-

formance aspects of purges and dry airways. Yet for easy, fun, occasional snorkeling, you are still best advised to keep it simple with a comfortable fit. For more serious snorkeling, consider the simpler dry airway or purge combinations such as Apollo Dry Snorkel, Dacor Integra, IDI Dry ProFlex, Mares Cyberdry, Ocean Master Dry Snorkel 2000, Scubapro Free Vented, Sea Quest Sidedraft Flex and U.S. Divers Impulse.

Suddenly two big eyes...



...a big mouth, and a snap of my camera.
Thank you Mr. Grouper. I see that you're impressed and so am I. A fully automatic dive camera that takes great pictures to 164 feet and costs only \$199*.
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Fins

Selection

ScubaLab's last two fin evaluations have underscored the importance of choosing a fin that not only fits and is comfortable but meets your individual diving needs and physical abilities:

- Divers with strong leg and hip muscles can effectively kick a larger and stiffer fin, while smaller or less conditioned divers should choose smaller, more flexible fins.
- Full-foot fins have the advantage of not requiring a dive bootie, but are best suited only for warmer waters.
- Fins with heel straps can be adjusted for different family members and for children as they grow.
- Fins with heel straps require less effort to put on.
- Although dive booties must be worn with open-heeled fins and add to cost, the booties also provide foot protection and comfort while diving and walking.
- Many of the smaller, less expensive fins for kids have hard, unforgiving foot



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pockets and should be avoided.

- When trying fins on, use exactly the same foot protection you will when diving or snorkeling. A dive bootie's thickness, zipper placement and sole construction all affect how a fin fits and feels.
- You'll know that a fin fits you properly if it fits you snugly without pinching, allows you to wiggle your toes, stays on easily when you try kicking with them out of the water, and does not bind your arch.
- Quick-release buckles aid in fin removal and replacement.

Modifications

- Pull tabs added to heel straps aid with moving the strap over the heel without readjusting it.
- If a full-foot fin is too large for a child this year, a sock or tropical dive bootie may fill the gap as he or she grows.

Usage Hints

- ScubaLab tests clearly demonstrate that the ability of a diver to kick correctly is more important than which fin is used.
- For most fins, a slow, strong kick from the hips with pointed toes and a minimum of leg bending is most efficient.
- Fins only work under water. When snorkeling, the fins should stay there as much as possible.

What to Buy

ScubaLab tests have shown that a few models work well for a broad range of divers: U.S. Divers Blades, Mares Avanti series, Scubapro Jet Fins and any close copies such as IDI Power Fins, Scubapro



Sea Wings and Beuchat Compact Pro. Most of these fins are available in both full foot and adjustable models.

For snorkeling, flexible, light, smaller fins are better. Many such fins are available so selection will be based on a comfortable fit with what is available locally.

Regulators

Selection

Because they have the greatest impact on

your safety while diving, regulators must receive your most serious and detailed consideration.

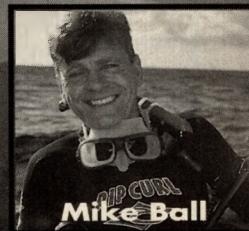
Although most dive operators do a credible job of maintaining their rental regulators, buying regulators for yourself and your family should receive top priority.

Fortunately, as ScubaLab tests have shown, high-performance quality is available at affordable prices (see "Best No-Frills Regulators," RSD, July '96).

In order to promote interchange

MIKE BALL DIVE EXPEDITIONS expands into PAPUA NEW GUINEA!

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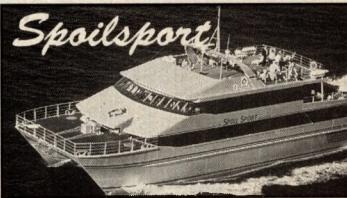
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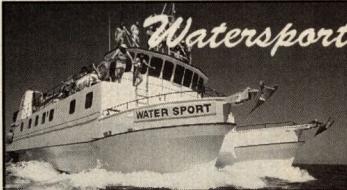
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Supersport Cod Hole-3 days	\$624	\$732
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among family members, keep regulators simple: avoid DIN fittings, multiple adjustments and high-end, highly sensitive regulators.

Modifications

- Change mouthpieces according to individual dental needs. Consider using specialty mouthpieces, including those that can be individually molded.
- Change the primary hose length so that the regulator sits straight in your mouth.
- Remove one or both hose protectors if they do not allow the hose to make a gentle curve into your mouth.
- To promote comfort, experiment with changing which low-pressure port is used on the first stage, or get a first stage that swivels.

Usage Hints

- When mounting a swiveling first stage to a tank, turn the swivel down to reduce its height and prevent head banging.
- Do not use the velcro or other primary hose retainer on the right shoulder of the BC; they usually cause the regulator second stage to sit crooked in your mouth.
- If the second stage has a diver adjustment, set it on the easiest breathing setting without the regulator free flowing.

What to Buy

ScubaLab has tested regulators more extensively than any other piece of dive gear. Currently, regulators that provide excellent performance at modest prices include:

Apollo Ecodiver
IDI Osprey Airtec 360
Mares Akros
Oceanic Alpha IV
Zeagle Z-US4



Those regulators that provide the highest performance, but at higher prices include:

Mares Abyss and Voltrex
 Oceanic Delta II
 Scubapro MK 20-G250 and D400
 U.S. Divers Micra+ and SEA4
 Zeagle Tech 50D

Most primary regulators can be used as alternate air sources ("octopuses" or "safe seconds"). Some second stages are made specifically for use as an alternate air source and are usually of lower performance. Alternate inflation regulators combine an alternate air source with a power inflator in one unit. Of these, the Scubapro AIR II remains the best.

BCs Selection

Your goals when selecting a BC should be to find a unit with adequate buoyant lift (but not too much), and a proper snug fit. Without correct fit, a BC cannot be used safely or effectively.

- For tropical diving (with little or no wetsuit protection), 12 to 24 pounds of lift is sufficient.
- For general recreational diving (with a full wetsuit or dry suit), 20 to 40 pounds of lift is recommended.
- Try the BC on over the thickest exposure protection you plan to use. It should fit snugly. Inflate the BC until the over-pressure relief valve activates. Properly adjusted, the inflated BC should not constrict your breathing.

Modifications

- For the smaller child who is becoming

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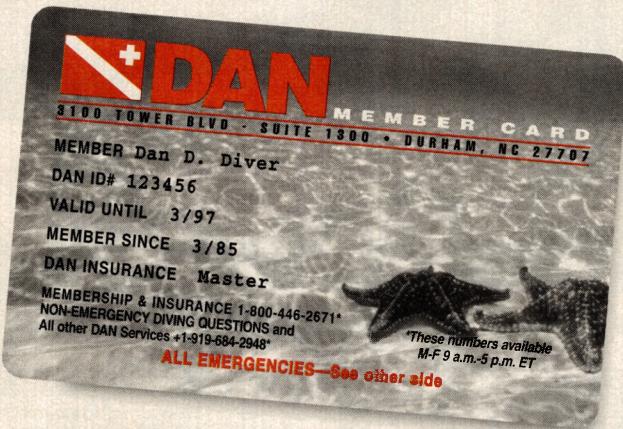
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** Membership includes evacuation, magazine and medical guide. Insurance is extra and ranges from \$25 to \$35 per year.

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a junior scuba diver, it may be difficult to find a BC that is small enough. However, back buoyancy BCs and BCs with hard packs provide a greater range of adjustment and stability for small divers and women.

► Three BCs are designed just for women: Forté Sirene, Sea Quest Diva and U.S. Divers Elan.

► Forté and Zeagle will customize BCs to provide sizes from XXS to XXL. Also, Forté is coming out with a children's BC line in 1997.

What to Buy

During past ScubaLab comparative evaluations, a number of BCs have stood out for their high performance, quality production, favorable pricing and available sizing. These include:

Dacor: Enduro, Extreme, Nautica

IDI: Nekton 2000, Paragon

Oceanic: Oceanpro 5, Trend

Scubapro: Classic, Compac

Sea Quest: Dimension 3D, Diva, Quick-draw, Spectrum series

Sherwood: DSV, Silhouette

U.S. Divers: Alcyone, Calypso, Cousteau

Zeagle: Ranger



RSD's *ScubaLab*, diving's only consumer product test facility, is located on Catalina Island, Calif., and directed by Jon Hardy.

Manufacturers Directory

Apollo Sports (415) 392-9143

Bare Sportswear (604) 533-7848

Beuchat (954) 978-1204

Body Glove (310) 374-4074

Dacor (847) 446-9555

Deep See (800) 367-2626,
(360) 435-6696

Forté (800) 500-8292,
(714) 848-8292

IDI (800) 257-2822,
(714) 994-3900

Mares (800) 874-3236

Oceanic (510) 562-0500

Ocean Master (818) 582-8000

Orca (703) 478-0333

Scubapro (800) 467-2822

Sea Quest (619) 438-1101

Sherwood Scuba (716) 283-1010

Sterling USA (310) 393-5358

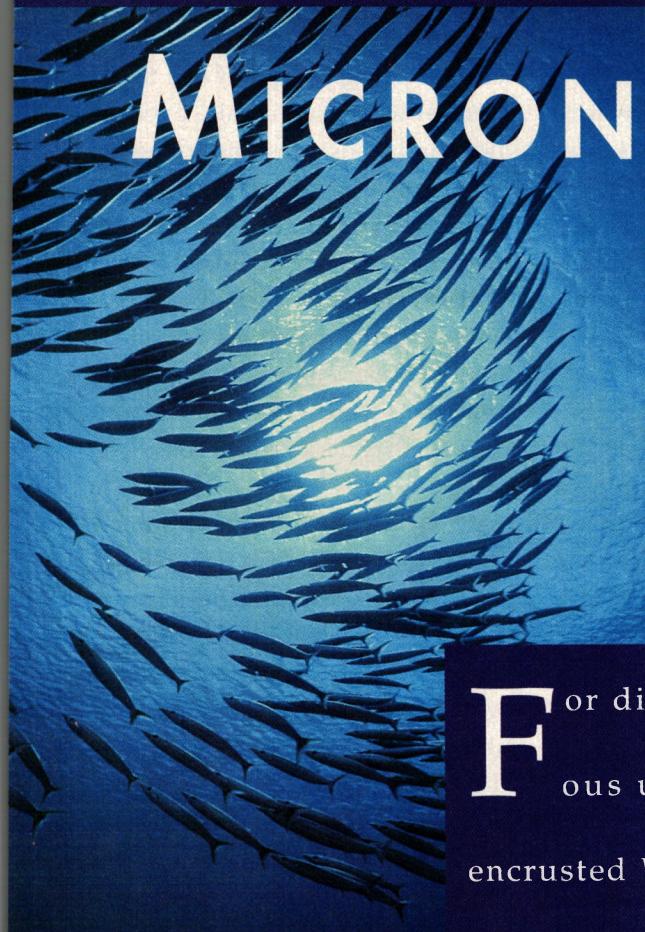
TUSA (310) 498-3708

U.S. Divers (714) 540-8010

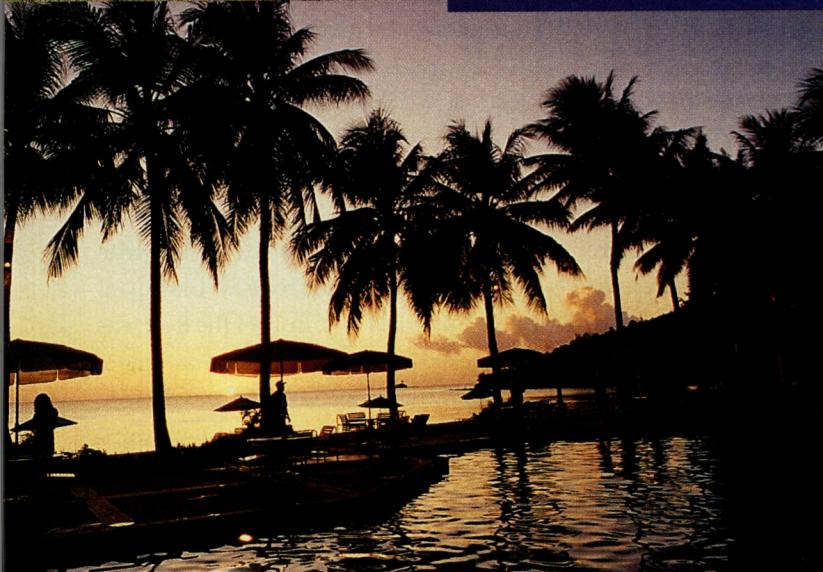
UWATEC (207) 729-7000

Zeagle (813) 782-5568

MICRONESIA



For divers, Micronesia's mysterious underworld with its coral encrusted WWII wrecks, colorful cliffs and astounding fish and animal life, is by far the biggest attraction. Yet, almost instantaneously upon arrival travelers discover that Micronesia's most profound intrigue lies in the hearts and lives of its inhabitants.



PURE
MAGIC

Although Micronesia's combined land mass is a mere 919 square miles, the 2,203 islands which make up this vast archipelago are scattered across a distance of three million square miles between the Philippines and Hawaii. It is believed that Micronesia's first settlers canoeed across the Pacific from the Philippines and Indonesia possibly as early as 400 B.C. Later, the eastern islands were discovered by explorers from Melanesia. Although a common thread links the cultures of similar origins, each island group is different. Other Pacific island groups like Fiji and Hawaii offer variations on a single melody — in Micronesia, every island is a completely different song.

Heading Micronesia's long list of impressive dive destinations is Palau, best known for its distinctively gorgeous reefs and stunning emerald green rock islands. Next in line is

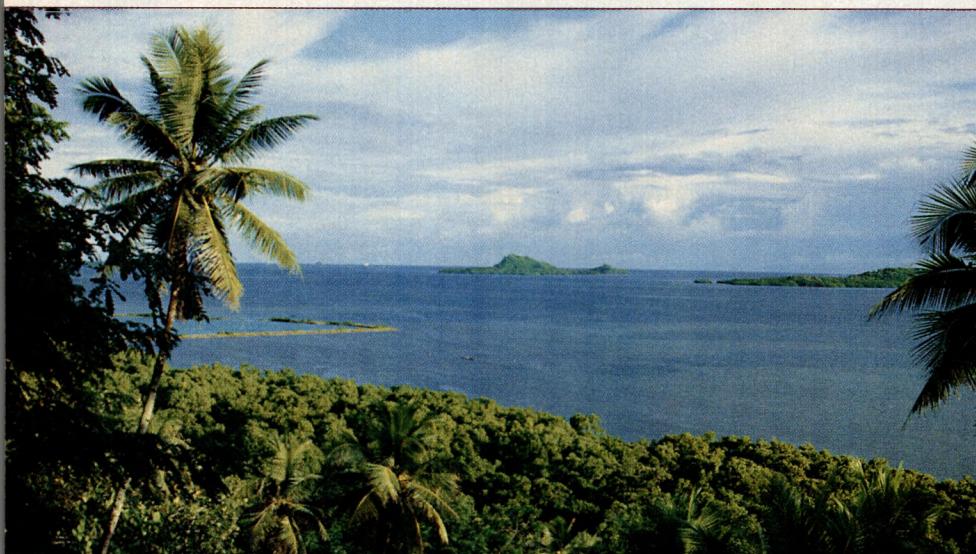
offers all the amenities of America, a colorful Chamorro culture, pretty reefs and interesting wreck dives. Lesser known but equally fascinating are Saipan, Rota, Kosrae and the Marshall Islands. All offer their own unique variety of reefs and wrecks and relics that tell the tragic tale of the war.

The 340 islands which comprise Palau are enclosed within a barrier reef forming a protected lagoon, 18 miles wide and 93 miles long. Scattered within the lagoon are hundreds of limestone rock islands—bizarre mushroom-shaped formations, once submerged volcanos, which over time became covered with coral before being pushed up out of the sea and blanketed with vegetation. Zipping through this maze at warp speed is, without a doubt, a highlight of any Palau adven-

encrusted **Big Drop-off** and **Siaes Tunnel** where soft corals cover the floor and walls. Most intriguing are Palau's underwater oddities like land-locked **Jellyfish Lake**—a sea of pulsating non-stinging blobs and **Chandelier Cave** with its myriad chambers and crystalline stalactites. For wreck lovers, there's more than 50 ships from the Japanese Imperial Navy on the bottom of the Palau Lagoon.

One of Micronesia's most beautiful islands is Pohnpei, complete with green mountain peaks, lush rain forests and thundering waterfalls. The barrier reef which encircles the island creates a sheltered lagoon inside with hundreds of protected coral reefs and a sheer 6000-foot outer wall.

Pohnpei's best diving is found in the 18 channels and passes which connect the lagoon to the open sea. The sea fans and soft corals which line the walls form a colorful backdrop for a perpetual parade of wildlife that convenes in the passes to feed; jacks, barracuda, sharks and manta rays are commonly seen. Another popular dive spot is **Ant Atoll**, located about 10 miles southwest of Pohnpei. The biggest attraction is **Ant Pass**, a screaming fish-filled drift dive. On the west side of Ant Pass is **Orange Wall**, so named for its quarter mile stretch of enormous orange elephant ear sponges—an underwater phenomenon unique to Pohnpei.



Chuuk, home of Truk Lagoon which boasts the largest collection of shipwrecks in the world. The newest star on Micronesia's diving scene is Yap, the only dive destination on the planet where manta sightings are guaranteed! Pohnpei, encircled by a barrier reef, is known for its walls of giant orange elephant ear sponges and thrilling fish-filled passes. The most developed island is Guam, a U.S. territory which

ture. Consistent currents flowing into the lagoon feed thriving coral gardens. The barrier reef, which descends to depths of more than 1,200 feet, attracts sharks, mantas and pelagics.

Palau's unique geological structure creates a wealth of diving opportunities. Most dramatic are the walls, including shark-infested **Blue Corner** where whitetips, blacktips and grey reef sharks congregate, and coral

Although WWII wrecks are found off many islands in Micronesia, none are more beautiful than those on the floor of Truk Lagoon. Shortly after WWI, Truk Lagoon became the base for the Japanese Imperial Fleet. In 1944 the fleet was attacked by a U.S. task force and more than 400 planes and 50 ships were lost. The warm water and consistent nutrient rich currents in Chuuk's sheltered

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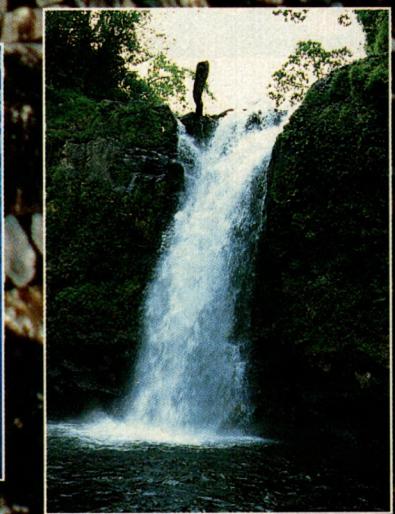
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lake-like lagoon provides ideal conditions for coral growth and these lifeless metal hulks have since been transformed into extraordinary, kaleidoscopic soft coral wonderlands.

Of the 50 known war casualties, more than 35 have been discovered and several dozen are dived on a regular basis. The 437-foot **Fujikawa Maru**, a Japanese freighter, is one of the local favorites. It was used as an aircraft ferry, and propeller blades,

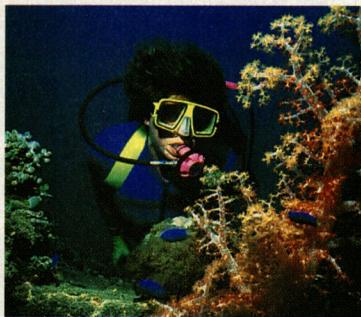
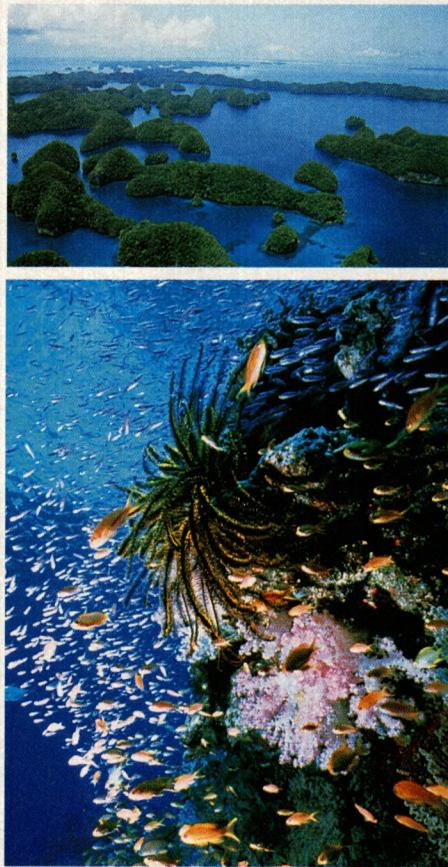
machine guns, bullets, saki bottles and Zero fighter fuselages can be found in the ship's cargo holds. One of Chuuk's most beautiful wrecks is the **Shinkoku Maru**, a Japanese tanker adorned with a forest of yellow, pink, red and white soft coral.

Without a doubt, the most exotic island in Micronesia's cache of treasures is Yap—the island of stone money and

manta rays. The culture and language of Yap is entirely different from the rest of Micronesia and village visits are a trip back in time; women wear grass skirts, men wear loincloths and outdoor banks display giant stone money disks up to 12 feet across. Although the Yapese no longer quarry stone money, more than 7,000 pieces remain on the island and the discs are still used as local currency.

Almost a decade ago, huge congregations of manta rays were discovered in one of the channels that lead to Yap's sheltered lagoon. Since then, more than 100 of these graceful winged creatures have been identified and manta diving has indisputably become Yap's main attraction. **Manta Ridge**, a popular gathering spot, is a manta ray cleaning station; mantas, often more than a dozen at a time, hover in formation while parasites are removed by wrasses and other tiny cleaners. Equally exciting and completely different is a drift dive through **Mil Channel**. Divers begin their adventure on an incoming tide at the mouth of the channel and float past spectacular scenery while squadrons of mantas, eagle rays, sharks and clouds of trevally jacks cruise by. For those who can bear to tear themselves away from the mantas, Yap also offers an excellent assortment of coral gardens, caverns and walls.

On all of the islands you'll find comfortable accommodations and reputable dive operators. Palau and Chuuk also offer the option of live-aboard diving. Continental Airlines' convenient island hopper service makes getting to Micronesia a breeze. Direct flights are available into Guam with convenient connections to the outer islands, and several times a week flights stop at each island along the way. If you have the time, visit two or more islands during your stay and see all Micronesia has to offer.

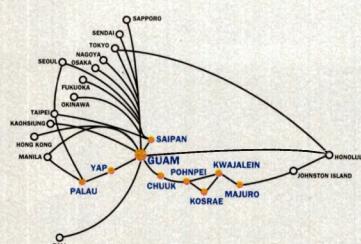


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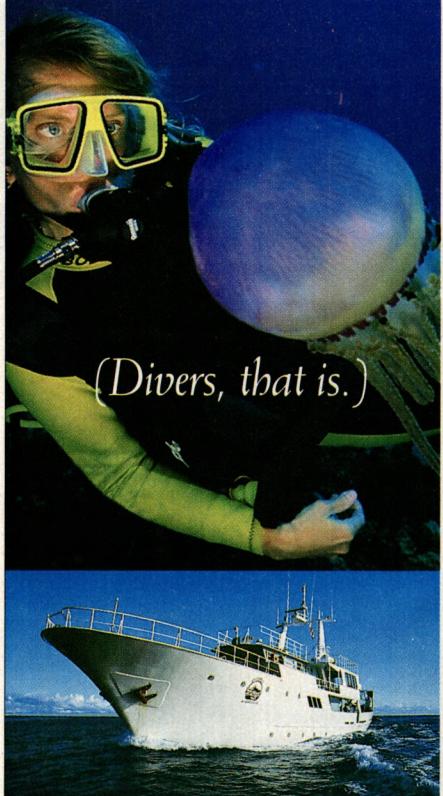
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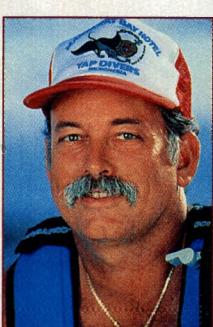
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Manta Ray Bay Hotel and Yap Divers owner Bill Acker discovered many of Yap's now famous sites where manta rays congregate regularly.

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Y A P

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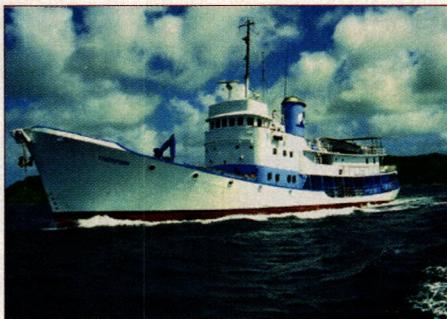
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The Carolines Resort

P A L A U

The Carolines is a small resort with five private bungalows overlooking the Rock Islands of Palau. Five more bungalows are under construction. The resort offers guests a nearby private beach, pool and tennis courts. Dive packages are available starting at \$923 pp/do for 7 nights/5 days diving. 011-680-488-3754, fax 011-680-488-3756

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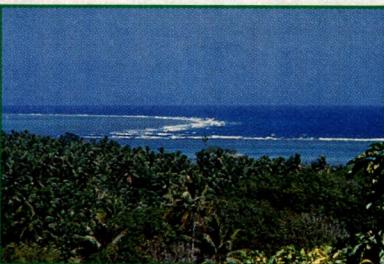
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Fish 'N Fins

PALAU

As the pioneer dive shop in Palau, Fish 'N Fins is given credit for discovering most of Palau's dive sites. Their fleet includes two 30-foot and two 25-foot dive boats carrying no more than six to ten divers. Fish 'N Fins prides itself on



Fish 'N Fins and the Palau Marina Hotel, the perfect combination for diving value in Palau.

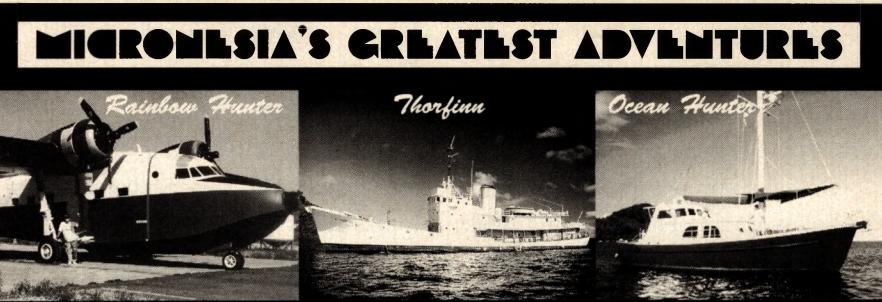
The Carolines

"A SMALL RESORT"

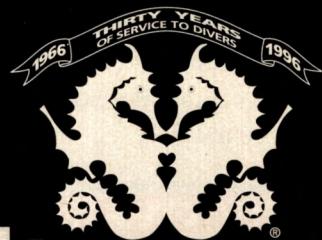
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personalized service and no cattle herding on dive boats. Fish 'N Fins offers NAUI certifications including a four-day course for Open Water I. Hotel/dive packages are offered with the Palau Marina Hotel located next door. Packages include accommodations at Palau Marina, diving, breakfast and picnic lunch for \$130/day double occupancy. For further information, contact Poseidon Ventures Tours 800-854-9334.

Sam's Dive Tours

P A L A U

Sam's Dive Tours offers personalized service above and below the surface with only eight divers or less per boat and customized diving available. They offer PADI certifications from Discover Scuba and Snorkeling to Assistant Instructor plus most of the PADI specialties. Sam's offers hotel/dive packages with a variety of hotels to fit your budget. A 7-night/5-days-diving package includes 10 boat

dives, lunch, drinks, tanks, weights and hotel transfer for \$642.50 pp/do. 011-680-488-1062, fax 011-680-488-5003

Carp Island Resort/ Palau Diving Center

P A L A U

Carp Island Resort and Palau Diving Center are known for their close proximity to Palau's best dive sites, safe diving service and well-trained and professional divemasters. The resort offers nine seaside cottages or dive house accommodations. A 6-night/7-days-diving package is \$980-1079 pp/do depending on the season and includes accommodations and tax, seven two-tank boat dives, three meals per day, airport and boat transfer, weights and guide. 011-680-488-2978, fax 011-680-488-3155

Palau Pacific Resort

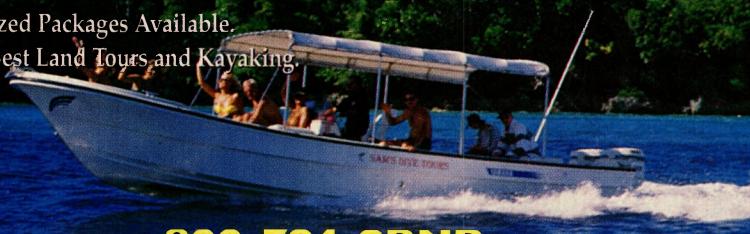
P A L A U

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Micronesian immersion:

(noun)
1. the act of plunging into Micronesia's pristine waters where the action is electric, the wild life remains wild, wrecked ships become grand reefs and tiny organisms create unimaginable colors.
2. a preoccupation with Micronesia's mural of brilliant sunsets, untamed landscape, open-hearted people and layers of history within its legends, traditional houses, ancient dances, massive ruins and remnants from wars past.

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Sundance Tours & Dive Shop

T R U K

Sundance Tours & Dive Shop is the only fully integrated tour operator in Truk Lagoon. STDS has a new Rob Shirley's Pro 42 dive boat offering two 2-tank diving trips a day. STDS offers dive packages with the best



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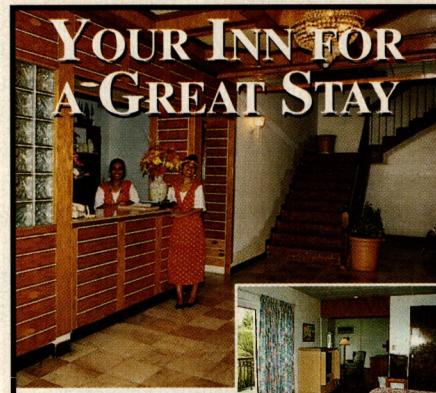
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hotels on the island. Packages start at \$425 pp/do and include airport transfer, dive guide, tanks, weights and lunch on dive days. 011-691-330-4234, fax 011-691-330-4451. E-mail: info@divetruklagoon.com Internet: <http://www.divetruklagoon.com>

Truk Stop Hotel

T R U K

With its new dock, including rinse area and dive lockers, the Truk Stop Hotel now has it all. It offers a central location close to the airport, shopping and dive facilities. The resort-sized rooms overlook Truk Lagoon and have air conditioning, private bath and balconies plus cable TV. A patio bar and air-conditioned restaurant offer guests fine food and drink on-site. Packages are available. 011-691-330-4232, fax 011-691-330-2286. E-mail: compuserve 105121, 304



The Truk Stop Hotel is located right on Truk Lagoon. The 23 resort size guest rooms include standard and deluxe oceanview rooms and suites. Room amenities include AC, refrigerator, phone, cable TV and drinking water. Enjoy the spectacular view of Truk Lagoon from the patio bar or the restaurant. The Truk Stop's newest addition is a dock, complete with rinse area and dive lockers for divers convenience.

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"Treasure Island Divers receives great response from our ads in Rodale's Scuba Diving. We've been advertising in the magazine for three years and recently have found that more and more people are calling **and booking** as a



result of reading the magazine. You can always tell when a new issue comes out because our phones start ringing almost immediately. Treasure Island Divers advertises in

Rodale's Scuba Diving because it puts divers on our boats!

Thanks Rodale's!"

LYNN BROCKMAN · MARKETING DIRECTOR



"As the new director of the YMCA Scuba Program and faced with a variety of options to express our new ideas, I ran just one ad in Rodale's Scuba Diving in early 1996. I was very impressed with the response this ad generated. With the YMCA Scuba Program's recent renaissance, we are focusing on a new direction. Rodale's Scuba Diving delivered our message to serious divers who represent the leaders in scuba. After seeing these results, I plan to continue advertising in RSD for one important reason — It Works!"

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"Have you ever heard this before?
It's raining—business is slow.
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Customers are just not buying—business is slow.
If you have, call Rodale's Scuba Diving—the magazine that keeps the customers calling 24 hours a day."

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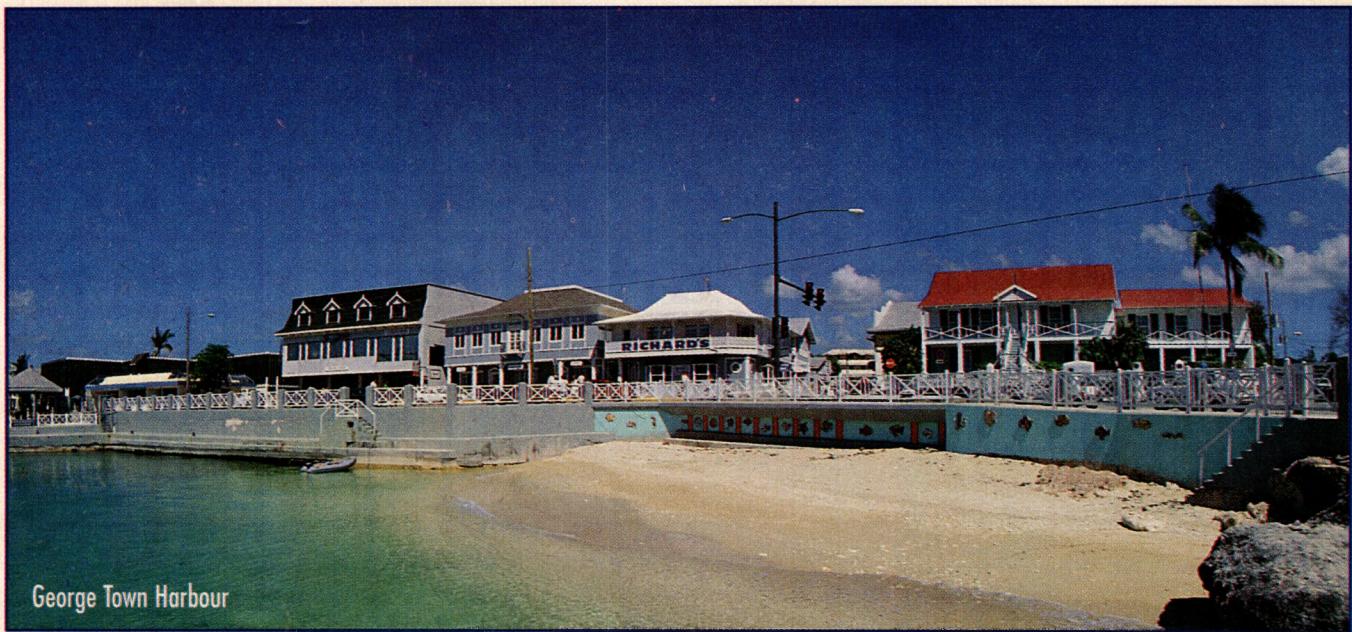
The Cayman Islands: Sparkling even Brighter in Winter



If this winter is anything like last year's, most of North America can expect to be gripped in record-breaking low temperatures well into spring. For divers escaping frigid weather, the Cayman Islands sparkle in winter, from the crystal-clear vis and bright-blue water of the Caribbean to the colorful reefs, walls and ravines beckoning just offshore.

On Grand Cayman, spend a day playing with the friendly residents of Stingray City, swim the spectacular cliffs along the fabled North Wall or dive the exciting East End. Or perhaps make a side trip to one of the sister islands, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, to sample the superb diving there.





George Town Harbour

This winter, the choice is going to be even more difficult, thanks to Cayman Brac's scheduled addition of an awesome dive site—a 330-foot Soviet warship. (At the time of this article, the ship was scheduled to be sunk in the fall.) Known as *Patrol Vessel No. 356*, this is the only diveable Soviet warship anywhere in the world. It will be conveniently situated in a 110-foot trench, 200 yards out from the old Buccaneer Inn.

With so many world-class options and more than 40 dive operators servicing the three islands, it's getting really tough to decide where to dive ... except obviously somewhere in the Cayman Islands. Maybe this will help.

Grand Cayman, the largest and most developed of the three islands, offers the best nightlife, the largest number of luxury hotels and condos and the most varied restaurant selection. Grand Cayman is also the birthplace of modern sport diving in the Caribbean. It's not surprising it all started here in 1957, since Grand Cayman boasts two aspects of the sport unequaled anywhere else: extremely varied marine life plus superb wall diving.

One of the world's great underwater spectacles is the world-renowned **Stingray City**, the protected site in North Sound where as many as 50 Southern stingrays have almost become divers' pets. In just 12 - 15 feet of water, Stingray City is also a snorkeler's dream come true.

Divers can also approach larger rays, some two to three times the size of Stingray City's, at the 60-foot site known as the **Valley of the Rays**. Half-burying themselves in the sand, these rays usually remain at rest unless disturbed. Equally as amazing is the crowded spot known as **Tarpon Alley**, where scores of schooling tarpon can be found hanging in the same long coral canyon.

Ironically, as Grand Cayman's 22-mile-long coast is better explored, more

Below Lies A Spectacular Adventure.

Dive the breathtaking walls of Cayman Brac and Little Cayman. Swim in water teeming with wildlife.

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Prices subject to change. Based on double occupancy. e-mail refz79a@prodigy.com

and more animal hangouts are being discovered, so the variety of marine life is ever expanding, not disappearing, as on some other Caribbean islands.

It was Grand Cayman's **North Wall**, a remarkable line of reef that runs for 20 miles off the north coast, that first made Cayman a diving legend. The ravines, tunnels and drop-offs beginning between 30 and 90 feet are so thickly lined with huge, fan-shaped gorgonians that they often obscure the hard corals under them. On the protected lee side, equally celebrated **West Wall** runs parallel to shore for almost nine miles, has little current and often boasts vis of 100 feet. It's also a very short boat trip from the major hotels on Seven Mile Beach.

When the North Wall is unavailable in winter due to a passing cold front, another popular and reliable spot is the 18-mile-long **South Wall** where the water is often swimming-pool calm. Impressive ravines and deep valleys often segment South Wall, which begins at about 80 feet. At the six-mile-long East End Wall, conditions are often rough, but that's just why many experienced divers love it. East End is the spot for seldom seen deep-water creatures like manta rays, sharks, tuna and even sailfish.

The Caribbean's wall of walls, however, is at tiny Little Cayman, voted the Caribbean's best dive destination in last year's *Rodale's Scuba Diving Readers' Choice Top 100*. Not only did Little Cayman take top honors for best wall diving but also for best fish life and healthiest reefs.

At famed **Bloody Bay** and **Jackson Point**, the sheer drop-offs begin at 18 feet, an amazingly shallow depth where many of the colors remain strikingly visible. Nowhere else will you find such a thick blend of sponges, corals and fans at such shallow depths in sparkling clear water. Every spot is a good one, some truly great, guaranteed to provide a lifetime memory. The outstanding fish life comes in the forms of tropicals and large tame grouper.

Little Cayman devotees will admit that the walls on nearby Cayman Brac are every bit as rich, only deeper. The Brac offers excellent walls off both the north and south coasts between 50 and 60 feet on the north side and between 80 and 90 off the southern coast. The

south side is also home to the Brac's huge school of resident tarpon that cluster over open reefs in just 30 to 35 feet.

The sinking of the Soviet warship off the Brac is altering completely the direction of diving there. Previously, boats from the Brac would go regularly to Little Cayman for the wall diving there but it was never vice versa. Soon, dive boats from Little Cayman will be shuttling back and forth to dive the Brac's new "shipreef."

The beauty of diving all three Cayman Islands is that even in winter, there's always somewhere you can dive. With so many outstanding sites, warm water and sheltered lees, it's easy to understand why so many divers escape freezing temperatures and winter's doldrums to come here.



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5 days diving	\$330	\$600	\$270
6 days diving	\$400	\$720	\$320

*For one 2-tank a.m. dive and one 2-tank p.m. dive



Treasure Island Divers now proudly owns Dive Inn, conveniently located at Sleep Inn Hotel.

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You're treated like one of the family at Treasure Island Divers, where the boats travel to all four sides of Grand Cayman and the divers dictate the dive sites.



45-foot boats offer freshwater showers, marine heads, camera rinse and a spacious sundeck which shades the bottom deck. The first boat leaves at 8:00 a.m. every morning — the earliest departure time on Grand Cayman — giving Treasure Island Divers customers the best possible position on dive sites. Treasure Island Divers recently purchased Dive Inn, one of the island's best small operators, located next to the Sleep Inn, the primary

Treasure Island Divers

At Treasure Island Divers, divers decide where the boats will go and the choices seem endless since Treasure Island Divers dives all four sides of Grand Cayman. Treasure Island Divers' three

hotel used by Treasure Island Divers when booking packages. Custom packages are arranged on an individual basis. Treasure Island Divers is a PADI 5-Star IDC Center offering resort courses through instructor. 800-872-7552, fax 809-949-7125

Coconut Harbour

With one of Grand Cayman's most popular dive operators on-site, Coconut Harbor is truly a dedicated divers' resort. 35 rooms offering pool or ocean views each feature a kitchenette and a queen-sized bed plus a single bed (king-sized beds only in the oceanfront rooms). The on-site dive operation, Parrots Landing, dives the west, south and north walls and Sting Ray City plus offers unlimited shore diving on Waldo's Reef just 20 yards from the shop. A 4-night dive package through Dec. 15, 1996 ranges from \$435-483 pp/do and includes accommodations, continental breakfast and two-tank boat dive daily. 800-552-6281, fax 317-322-1885



Coconut Harbour, a dedicated divers' resort, is the site of one of Grand Cayman's most popular dive operators, Parrots Landing.



CAYMAN BRAC
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per person, dbl occ.



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Free: One night accommodations (pay for 6 stay 7).

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Applies to Monday thru Thursday arrivals.

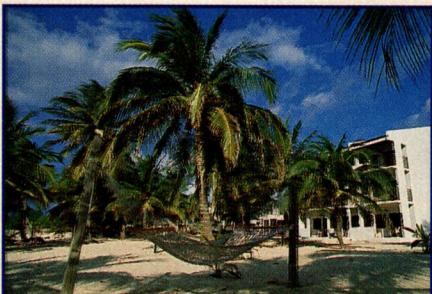
Experience the world class dive sites of Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

(800) 367-3484

Price quoted is per person, double occ. based on 7 night stay. **Free offer does not include meals or beverages.** Offer valid for arrivals through December 10, 1996. One person, per room, must be certified diver. **This offer is not available to groups.** Offer is subject to availability and may change without notice. Other restrictions may apply. Local Phone: (919) 419-3484

Divi Tiara Beach Resort

Dive the world-famous walls of Cayman Brac and Little Cayman as well as Cayman Brac's newest dive site, a Russian destroyer wreck dive. Peter Hughes Divi Tiara, a 5-Star facility, is Cayman Brac's largest dedicated dive resort with 59 guest rooms ranging from Standard to Luxury accommodations. Divers will enjoy the flexibility made possible by their five custom dive boats—all between 38 and 40 feet long. Photo Tiara offers E-6 processing, underwater video and camera repairs. Room rates until December 19, 1997 range from \$105 (standard) to \$200 (luxury). Unlimit-



Enjoy the relaxed way of life on Cayman Brac at Divi Tiara Beach Resort, the Brac's largest dedicated dive resort.

ed daytime boat diving is \$66 per person, per day. 800-367-3484, 919-419-3484, fax 919-419-2075

Brac Reef Beach Resort

Located on the south shore of Cayman Brac with 1,000 feet of white sand beach, the resort is surrounded by lush tropical foliage and has 40 deluxe pool view rooms, a restaurant with indoor and outdoor dining and a full service dive shop. According to Dan Tibbetts, President, Brac Reef Beach Resort, "Our goal is to offer guests not only the best resort service but also first-class diving at the top dive destination in the Caribbean using our fleet of new 'state-of-the-art' custom dive

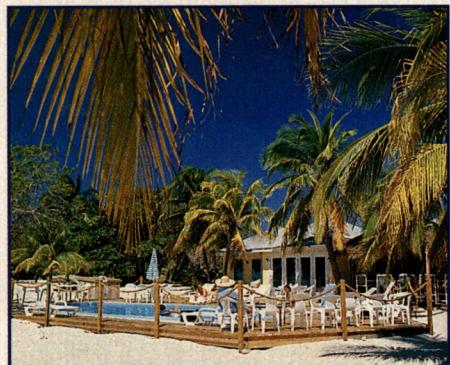


Beautiful Brac Reef Beach Resort boasts an all-new fleet of modern dive boats guaranteeing you the perfect dive experience.

boats." Package prices start at \$303 for three nights. The most popular package is seven nights for \$651 pp/dbl and includes three dives per day, taxes and gratuities. 800-327-3835, 813-323-8727, fax 813-323-8827

Southern Cross Club

With their dive boat just off your doorstep and a maximum of ten divers, the Little Cayman dive experience does not get any better than at the Southern Cross Club. Under new ownership and management, the Club has ten newly renovated beachfront cottages with private baths and air-conditioning. Resort



When you've finished diving the Caribbean's best walls, relax poolside or on the beach at the intimate Southern Cross Club.

amenities include a pool with tiki bar, free bicycles, sunset cruises, flats and deep sea fishing and a variety of water-sports. Room rates include three outstanding meals per day. Dive and fish packages are available. 800-899-CLUB (2582), fax 809-948-1098, e-mail: scc@candw.ky. Home page: <http://scubacentral.com/scc.html>

The Southern Cross Club is a natural seaside preserve and secluded island hideaway located on the finest beach in Little Cayman. You will step from your newly renovated private beach cottage, one of only ten that dapple the white sand at waters edge, onto our comfortable dive boat, *Coral Star*. Experience the famous Bloody and Jackson Bay walls with a maximum of ten divers. Our primitive luxury is unique in the Caribbean providing an unforgettable experience. Enjoyment comes naturally at the Southern Cross Club.

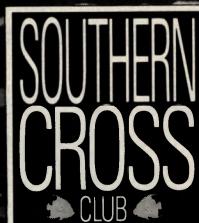
Little Cayman, BWI

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Teaching Your Kids To Snorkel

Rodale's
Guide to
FAMILY
DIVING

Before you throw your kids overboard, make sure they know how to use the tube. By JENNIFER KING



FIRST THING YOU HAVE TO TELL YOURSELF: IF you made it through potty training, this'll be a breeze. And the rewards of teaching your kids to snorkel are just as impressive.

You get to share one of the special things in your life—the underwater world—with your children, helping them to develop a sensitivity to the marine environment and build water skills and confidence that will benefit them throughout their lives. Not to mention having fun together and listening to their squeals of delight when they finally join the fish.

Some basic questions and answers:

What equipment should I buy?

► Finding well-made, properly fitting gear for children is an essential safety consideration. That's why this issue's gear review article ("Family Dive Gear," page 63) is devoted to it. Besides, there's nothing that will chase a kid out of the water faster than being uncomfortable.

► Parents should purchase dive equipment only from a professional retail dive store, and avoid the prepackaged ensembles available at discount and general sporting goods stores. In a dive store, not only will you find gear that will hold up and perform better, you'll also find a knowledgeable staff who knows which equipment is made for children and how to fit it.

When and where should I begin teaching my kids?

► Start early. Buy a mask and snorkel when your kids are two or three years old, and let them play with the equipment whenever you go swimming. They'll be experts by the time you go on your first resort trip.

► Remember the key to every instructional endeavor with children: make it *fun*. Don't get hung up on details. If your child wants to use the mask or snorkel alone or wants to carry the snorkel instead



BUILDING THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE, LEARNING ABOUT THE MARINE WORLD, HAVING FUN WITH THEIR PARENTS—ALL ARE BENEFITS OF TEACHING YOUR CHILDREN TO SNORKEL AND EVENTUALLY TO DIVE.

of mounting it on her mask, let her.

► Take your turn first. Try each technique before teaching it to your child. Many divers have not been taught to snorkel or haven't done it in a long while. Be sure to practice the pike dive and snorkel clearing techniques before showing them to your children.

How do I introduce the mask?

► Step 1: Clean the mask following the manufacturer's directions (usually with a mild abrasive like toothpaste), and rub in a good defogger—one look at someone spitting into a mask and your kid may opt for a more hygienic sport.

► Step 2: While your child is standing on the pool's steps or in shallow water, position the mask over his face, ensuring that his eyes and nose are not pinched. Pull the strap over his head and, if necessary, adjust for proper tightness—enough to hold it

in place, but no more. Remember: proper fit provides a good seal, not tightness. A too-tight mask can turn kids off faster than spit.

► Step 3: Playtime! Show them some fun things under water—people's hairy legs, toys or coins you've put on the bottom. In the ocean, look for small fish, rocks, shells, possibly "pirate treasure" you've hidden. Non-swimming children can be towed on a boogie board or given a foam-padded "floatie" suit that provides buoyancy without immobilizing or constricting their arms as do life jackets and arm floats.

Caribbean's Top 10 Snorkel Spots

Anse Chastanet Reef, St. Lucia

Stingray City, Grand Cayman

Isla Catalina, Dominican Republic

Angel Reef, Tobago

Klein Bonaire, Bonaire

Shoal Bay, Anguilla

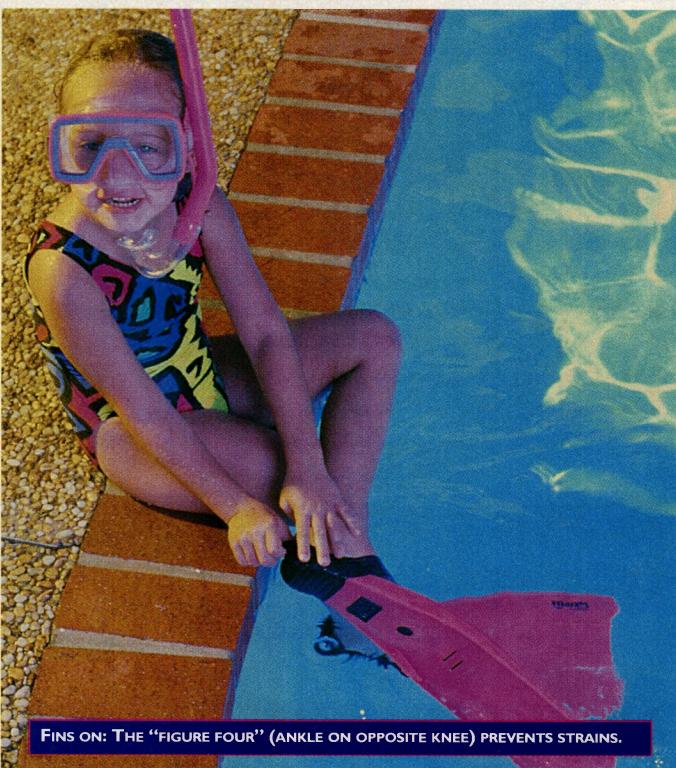
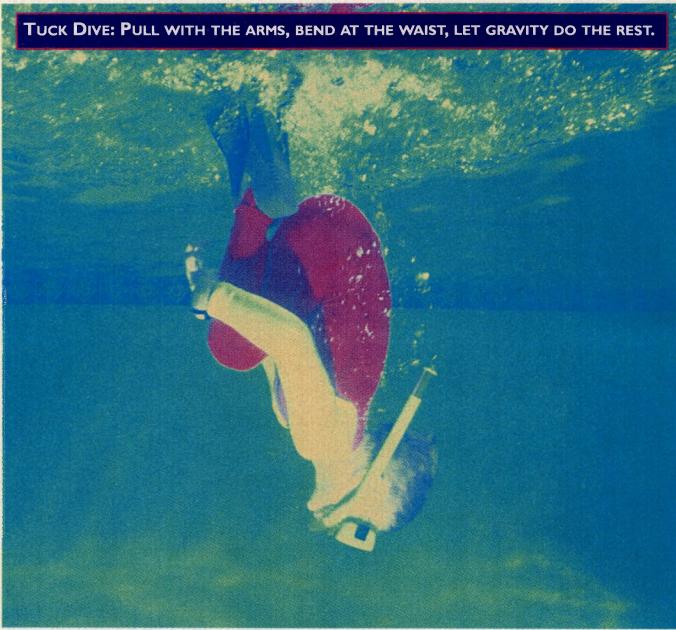
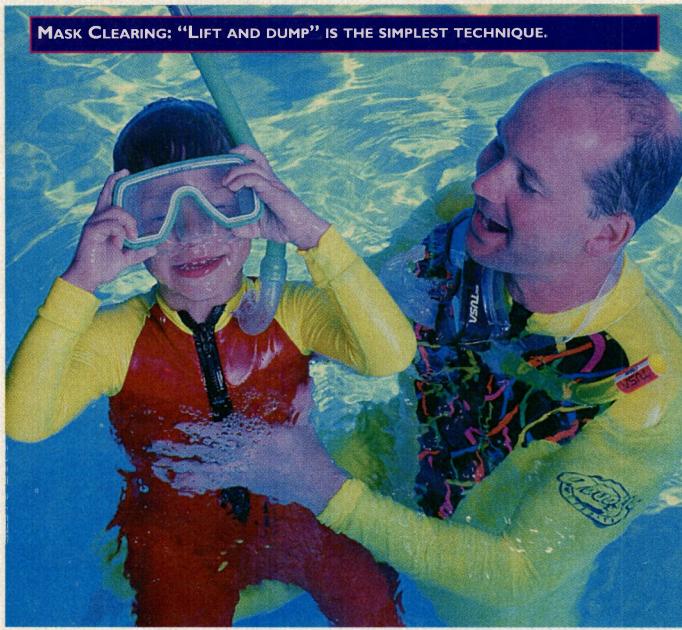
Pigeon Island, Guadeloupe

Turquoise Reef, Provo, Turks & Caicos

Barcadera Reef, Aruba

The Baths, Virgin Gorda, BVI

Source: Caribbean Travel & Life



How do I teach mask clearing?

- For younger kids, demonstrate the "lift and dump" technique. Standing in the shallow end, bend over and fill your mask with water. After a warning about inhaling through the nose, simply lift the mask's bottom and drain.
- Older kids can be taught to purge their mask using two hands on the top of the mask and exhaling through their nose. They will be quite proud of this accomplishment and can even practice it under water by kneeling on the bottom in the shallow end.

What about the snorkel?

- Smaller children may be quite content with just the mask, and that's fine. Older children will appreciate the heads-down benefit of the snorkel, although be prepared for those who insist on holding it rather than attaching it to the mask. Whatever works for them.
- As with the mask, begin in shallow water, first standing up, then with face in the water. Once your child's comfortable with the snorkel, let her swim around with it and, if possible, convince her to let you attach it to her mask.

What are the best snorkel clearing techniques for children?

- Once your child is comfortable breathing with a snorkel, it's time for some clearing techniques. Again, the easiest one is the "lift and dump"—taking the mouthpiece out and turning it down to drain.
- The next step is to show kids how to blow water gently out the purge valve. Then comes the fun part—the blast method. Kids have a great time spraying each other with blasts, a fun way to

gain proficiency.

► Older kids can be taught the displacement method—swimming down to fill the snorkel and exhaling a small bubble on ascent that expands and clears the snorkel of most water. With this method, children should also be taught to use their tongue as a splash guard for the first breath.

Do kids need fins?

► Younger children may not want to bother with fins. That's fine, as they can have plenty of fun and mobility without them. Older kids will quickly become fin aficionados once they realize the additional maneuvers they can perform and the ease and speed of movement that fins allow.

► Start by showing your child how to don fins using the "figure four"—one leg crossed over the opposite knee—both standing and seated.

► Using your arms, demonstrate the proper form for the flutter kick: keeping the legs straight as possible while you kick from the hips.

► Then hold your child under the abdomen in shallow water while practicing the kick. Try to adjust problems like bicycling or too much knee bending, but don't be overly concerned about form.

► Once he enjoys his fins, show your child variations—the back flutter kick and the scissors kick—so that he learns to work different muscle groups in case of fatigue.

Should I teach them to free dive?

► Once your child has mastered basic fin usage, free diving is a next logical step. Kids can practice in the pool to get ready for the reef.

► The pike dive should be done while your child swims forward. Bending at the waist, he should pull his arms to his sides and thrust his legs to the sky. If his legs stay together, their weight and gravity will push his body straight down, especially if he keeps his arms at his sides. The tuck dive—same as the pike except done from a stationary position—is slightly more difficult because there's no forward momentum.

► To perform these dives, your child will need to equalize the pressure in her ears. The most effective method is holding the nose and gently blowing against her closed mouth and nose to equalize pressure in the eustachian tubes. Other techniques include swallowing, yawning and moving the jaw, but are difficult to do effectively during short free dives.

Tips for Their First Beach Snorkel

1. Scout the site. First-timers need to be in shallow water where either they or you can stand. A good bet is the beach. You won't see as much, but conditions allow for a fun and safe first outing.

2. Know thy neighbors.

Prepare children with videos or books to identify marine life and especially which plants and animals to avoid. Waterproof

fish charts are great, as are underwater slates and markers to record what they see. Discuss with them the importance of not touching corals and sponges.

3. Bag it. Give each child a mesh bag to tote their gear and make them responsible for it. Bags can also be used for collecting, but be sure you know what is acceptable. Many dive destinations forbid collecting.

4. Avoid the burn. Provide

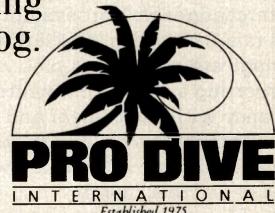
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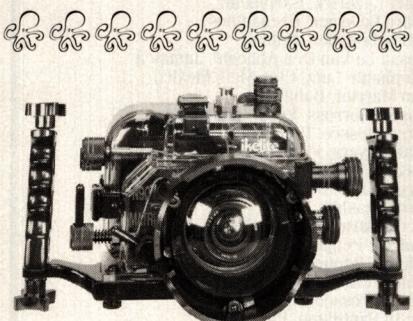


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each child either a skin, wetsuit or T-shirt. Use sunscreen. Pale backs, tropical sun and shallow water can combine for a nasty burn. Full-body coverage also protects from marine cuts and stings (see Dive Medicine, page 98).

5. Get your feet wet.

On the beach, enter at the water's edge and don fins while seated in about 12 inches of water. Look for isolated boulders that attract life. Most kids will love this first experience and be psyched for more exploration.

Tips for Boat Snorkeling

1. Keep it flat.

Many tropical resorts take a snorkeling boat to shallow reefs 10 to 20 feet deep. Experienced beach snorkelers will love this, but make sure conditions are right: flat water and no currents. Acceptable conditions for divers aren't necessarily good for snorkelers, especially children.

2. Learn boat behavior.

Because many resorts put divers and snorkelers on the same boat, discuss etiquette with your kids: working out of their gear bag, remaining seated when the boat is in motion, keeping out of others' way, letting divers in the water first, etc.

3. B.Y.O. flotation.

This can mean a wetsuit, snorkeling vest, floatie suit or even a boogie board. Also, check on life preserver regulations for smaller children. Any child who cannot swim should be wearing one during the boat ride.

4. Adults go first.

The parent should enter the water first and be prepared to assist the child. If available, hold onto a current line as you help your child adjust to the water and fine-tune any gear.

5. Maintain "soft" control.



Waiting to Exhale

THE SCOOP ON JUNIOR SCUBA CERTIFICATION

The minimum age to enroll in a scuba course is 12 years old. These junior divers are required to demonstrate the same knowledge and skills as adults do for basic open-water certification. Upon certification, junior divers can dive only with a certified adult and are restricted to a maximum depth of 60 feet. At 15, teenagers can convert their junior certification to adult status. Some certifying agencies also offer advanced open-water and specialty courses at the junior level. —THEANO NIKITAS

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On a first trip it is especially important to stay in control of your child while still giving him some freedom. Holding hands, gently encircling his waist with your arm, and towing him on a boogie board are all ways to stay close enough to deal with problems such as snorkel and mask flooding, disorientation and surface chop.

6. Preserve your memories.

Documenting your child's first snorkel experience on film provides memories but can also help dispel anxiety by giving her something fun to focus on. Disposable underwater cameras let a child take her own pictures. She'll love being a photographer and will be less apt to focus on scary things.

Jennifer King is president of the Women's Scuba Association and mother of two snorkeling sons.

Shooting in Air

How to make your topside vacation photos something to write home about. Text & Photography by FRANKLIN J. VIOLA



Rodale's Guide to FAMILY DIVING

The goal of professional travel photographers is to capture the mood and spirit of a destination, whether it's palm-laced beaches aglow at sunset, colorful tropical fruit in a local market or an alpine lake cloaked in firs. Besides documenting a destination pictorially, the underlying goal of these images is to evoke an emotional response and get readers to plunge into the accompanying story's pages.

In contrast, most recreational travelers shoot "Hi Mom!" photos, which usually include someone known to the photographer—family or friends—prominently featured in a destination setting. These images can be effective as personal mementos, but their audience appeal is usually narrow and short-lived.

So which should you shoot, mood or hi-mom photos? Well, it's your vacation, your story, your experience. But a combination of the two allows you to capture the best of both types and make your vacation album exciting and memorable.

Planning Your Story

The first thing a professional photographer does to prepare for an assignment is to create a story outline and shooting list. When traveling to any destination, it's important to get the expected images. These are the photos that readily identify a location for your audience: the Sydney Opera House in Australia, the Slave Huts of Bonaire, the tortoises of Galapagos. Look at guidebooks and magazine articles written about the destination you'll be visiting. What seem to be the must-have shots?

While photographing these subjects and landmarks in standard postcard style, also be sure to shoot them with your own personal twist

and viewpoint. Experiment with different lenses (wide and long) and compose traditional subjects from completely different angles and views. For example, a tightly cropped image of the Sydney Opera House "sails" can produce a fabulous photo. An extreme close-up of the face of a Galapagos tortoise can speak volumes about these ancient creatures.

Meet the People

To bring a destination alive for your audience, get away from your resort or hotel and photograph the local people, culture and color. As with the landmarks, don't be afraid to experiment. Shoot wide, shoot long and shoot tight. A portrait of a straw sombrero on a colorful blanket "says" Mexico better than a sign at the airport.

When photographing people, be polite and ask permission before invading their privacy. While many locals don't mind their smiles being captured by tourists, others do. Remember that you're a guest in their country and not a *Newsweek* photographer competing for a cover shot.

If you're participating in a group tour or using a local guide to see the sights, share your unique view by allowing others to

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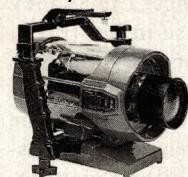


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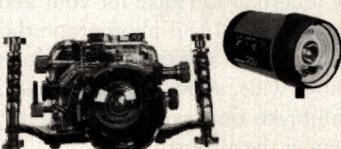
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look through your camera. Your wide or long lens may show them a unique angle or detail they might have missed. It will help them understand what kind of special vantages you're looking for and, in turn, they may find or suggest something you're not seeing. Indeed, local guides often share additional knowledge and become more helpful once you show them what the camera is seeing. Involving others also makes them more patient when you're the last to finish shooting.

Choosing the Right Film

First and foremost, determine how you want to display your vacation photos before you ever start packing. Print film is best for those who want to make a photo album or enlargements for framing. Slides, on the other hand, are better for presenting to audiences such as dive clubs, schools or churches. While slides can also be enlarged into prints, it's more of a hassle to store and retrieve them for just one or two friends to view.

In either case, placing your favorite vacation images (from slides or negatives) onto photo CD is quickly becoming one of the best ways to preserve, store and retrieve them. Check with your local camera store or film processor for details on how a photo CD can turn your television or computer monitor into a customized theater.

Quick Tips

► Limit the amount of camera equipment you lug around.

One or two zoom lenses (my favorites are 20-40 mm, 35-105 mm and 70-210 mm) packed in a padded fanny pack with a camera body, flash and film are just right for walking around town or strolling on the beach.

► Shoot off-center, sometimes.

If you're using an auto-focus camera, know how to place subjects off-center without having them go out-of-focus. Images that include people appear more balanced when you compose them to the left or right of the main subject.

► Shoot candids, too.

Staged or formal setups of family or friends are fine, but candids capture more of a moment's true feeling—its energy and particularity—than do posed photos. Plus, subjects often look better because they're active and being themselves.

**PHOTOGRAPHER'S
TOOLBOX****SEA & SEA'S
MX-10**

No experience needed! Now that's the kind of camera most vacation divers are looking for. With the focus-free and waterproof Sea & Sea MX-10 35 mm camera, beginning underwater photography is made simple. Constructed of impact-resistant polymers for long life and minimal maintenance, the MX-10 is a good companion for all outdoor vacation activities, as well as scuba diving.

Lightweight and compact, the sturdy MX-10 features a 32 mm focus-free lens, auto film load and frame advance, power rewind and built-in flash—helping to simplify tasks for the beginning diver/photographer. While the shutter speed is fixed at 1/100 sec., the aperture settings vary manually from f/4.5 to f/22. The multifunctional amphibious MX-10 camera also has an internal low exposure warning signal to assist you in determining the correct exposure. The MX-10 allows for the use of 100 or 400 ISO speed film.

As with all good underwater images, it's best to select subjects no farther than



three to five feet away, and to use flash to bring out vivid colors. The MX-10 offers a new infrared signaling system to synchronize with Sea & Sea's accessory YS-40 strobe. There are no cords or cables. Just slip the YS-40 onto the MX-10 and watch the colors jump out in your images.

Additional accessories for the MX-10 include a 20 mm wide conversion lens (increases the underwater coverage from 51 degrees to 74 degrees), and 1:4.5 macro lens and framer. Both lenses can be taken on and off under water via a simple bayonet mounting system.

For more information or the name of your nearest MX-10 dealer, contact Sea & Sea at (619) 929-1909.

► Use fill-flash.

Even when shooting in bright sunlight, fill-flash can open up harsh shadows (especially with people) and add more color saturation.

► Bring a tripod.

If you want to fine-tune your photographic skills, images shot from a stable platform are always sharper and can be more precisely composed. However, your ability to blend in with the scenery is compromised each time you set up a tripod. It's an awkward item to pack, and it can test the patience of your traveling companion. An alternative is to bring a sturdy monopod that can double as a walking stick.

► Don't forget your compass.

You can use your dive compass to locate sunrise (east) and sunset (west) before the grand events occur so you can plan your shoot. The best light for topside photography, unlike under water, is the soft, golden light of early morning or evening falling on your subject from behind you.

Knowing the direction of north and

south can also help you determine if a rigid structure (building, statue, etc.) will receive sunlight on the front side or the rear (the sun shines directly on objects facing south in the northern hemisphere and only on those facing north in the southern hemisphere).

Cameras for Kids

If your dive vacation includes spending time with family or friends, encourage them to participate in and contribute to the photo documentation. Let them use your camera periodically or, better yet, get them their own cameras. From standard 35 mm format to wide-angle panoramics, inexpensive disposable cameras are great fun and easy for aspiring photographers of all ages to use. For a few dollars more, these one-time-use cameras can even be housed for underwater shooting. Since beauty is in the eye of the camera holder, you may be surprised—especially from kids—what unique views your family and friends may produce.

Franklin Viola is an RSD field editor.

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CIRCLE NO. 96 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Beach Boo-Boos

How to treat the most common marine stings, cuts and scratches. By SAMUEL SHELANSKI, M.D.

Q: Besides the immediate pain, are there any long-term effects of a sea urchin sting? My daughter recently backed into a sea urchin and was stung on her buttock. The wound was debrided by a surgeon, and she was placed on penicillin.

Soon afterwards, she developed a stiff neck and local tenderness over the back of her neck. This has persisted for several weeks now despite normal x-rays and MRI. Her buttock is now OK, but there is questionable swelling over the back of her neck.

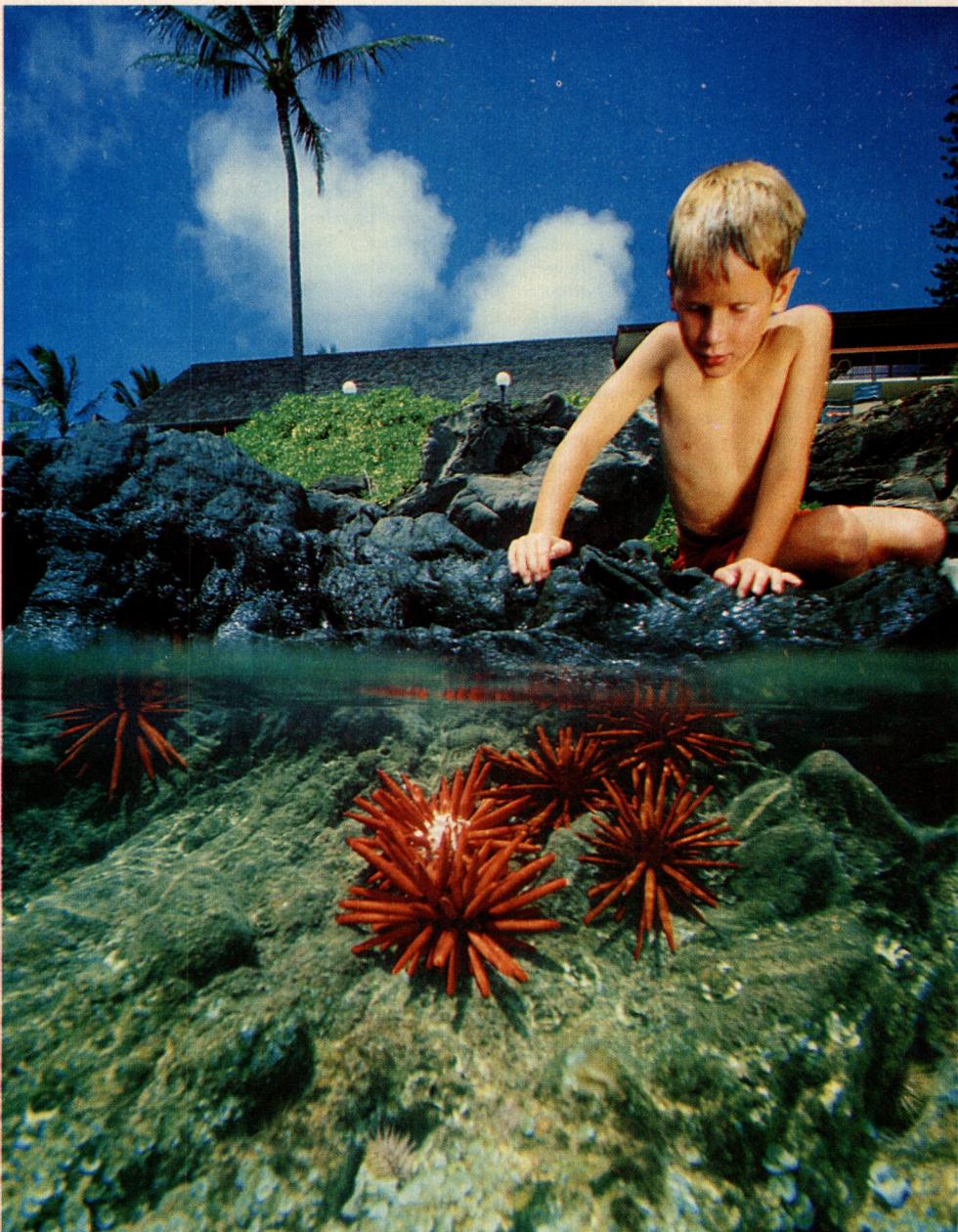
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A: The immediate effects of a sea urchin sting are usually a burning sensation, followed by swelling, redness and an aching pain. More severe complications can include infection, numbness or even paralysis. If a person is allergic to the venom, they may even have a life-threatening anaphylactic reaction, much like what someone who is allergic to bee stings experiences.

Usually, the symptoms of an urchin's sting will subside over a few days with appropriate treatment, which your daughter received. However, it's not uncommon to have some achiness or discomfort for some weeks, or even months, after the event. This usually occurs at or near the site of the sting, but—as in your daughter's case—can occur elsewhere. It's not particularly clear what causes these long-term effects, but it's likely a neurotoxic effect of the urchin's venom. In any case, I have been unable to find any case reports of permanent neurological damage from an urchin sting, and her symptoms should resolve with time.

To treat sea urchin wounds and other stings, cuts and sticks by marine life, we offer the following guide:

DAVID B. FLEETHAM



Sea Urchins, Stonefishes, Stingrays

Their Weapons:

Porcupines of the sea, urchin spines are like hypodermic needles that break off once deep inside you, injecting their venom. The venom from stonefish spines is delivered deep into the wound

and produces excruciating pain that may last several days. Stingrays use one or more large spines or stings on their tails as defensive weapons. When you step on one, the ray thrusts its tail forward and upward, lacerating or puncturing your foot, ankle or leg.

Effects:

Mind-numbing, eye-watering pain, redness, swelling and bleeding. Multiple punctures can cause weakness, paralysis, breathing difficulty, even death.

Rx:

► If possible, elevate the affected area and apply a pressure bandage. Both techniques will help slow the absorption of any venom in the wound. *Do not* apply a tourniquet. This will generally result in more damage than it will prevent.

► Immerse the wound in 45C/115F water, or as hot as you can tolerate, for 30 to 90 minutes. Many marine toxins are proteins which are destroyed by heat, much like what happens to an egg when it's hard-boiled. A hot soak can dramatically reduce the pain, and amount of damage, caused by a sting.

► Control the pain. The pain from marine stings can be excruciating and lead to shock, making pain control an important early step in wound care. This can generally be done with local anesthetics, and very rarely will require the use of systemic pain relievers or narcotics.

► Cleanse the wound with an antiseptic solution. Washing out remaining venom and pieces of spine will help minimize damage, speed healing and prevent infection. Leave an inaccessible spine alone only if it hasn't penetrated a joint, nerve or blood vessel.

► Seek appropriate medical care. Despite doing all of the above, some wounds will require surgical cleansing and repair, antibiotics for infection control, as well as antivenins and life support for severe stings. It is not always immediately obvious which stings will need more intensive medical care, so if at all possible, get care for all stings.

Coelenterates

Their Weapons:

Don't let the coy name fool you; these are nasty guys—stinging hydrozoans, fire coral (not a true coral) and jellyfish. Their weapons are nematocysts, stinging cells filled with venom and a coiled thread adorned with a barb at its business end. When triggered, the nematocyst fires and harpoons you with enough force to penetrate your skin and inject venom.

Effects:

Hydroids such as fire coral produce an immediate burning sensation followed within 30 minutes by an itchy rash that takes several days to heal. Jellyfish stings cause burning and leave a trail of bumps and welts. Serious jelly encounters can result in a severe burning sensation, muscle spasms, vomiting, shock, even collapse.

Rx:

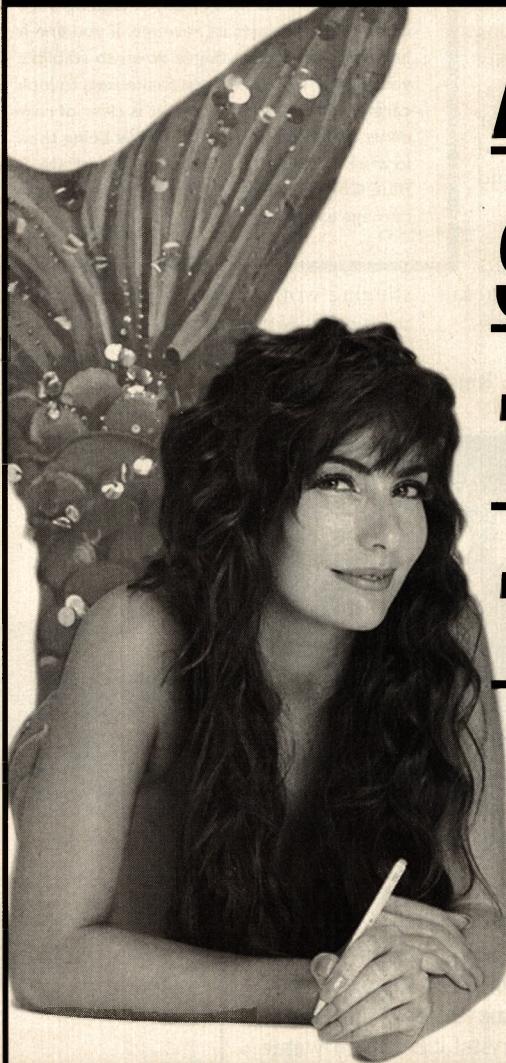
► Remove tentacles with a gloved hand

or tweezers to keep from getting stung and then rinse thoroughly with salt water. Fresh water or rubbing will trigger unfired nematocysts.

► Deactivate remaining nematocysts with a 5 percent vinegar solution until the stinging stops. Use isopropyl alcohol if you don't have vinegar. Meat tenderizer also neutralizes venom—add some to the solution if you have it.

► Apply shaving cream and scrape skin with a razor to remove nematocysts. A

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paste of mud, flour or talc scraped with a dive knife or credit card also works.

- Dry the skin and apply hydrocortisone ointment and take a diphenhydramine preparation (like Benadryl) for mild allergic reactions.
- Keep the victim still to prevent venom from spreading, with the injured part elevated above the heart.
- Serious stings that result in life-threatening reactions like spasms, breathing difficulty and shock require emergency medical attention.

Corals

Their Weapons:

Shame on you. Brushing against coral removes its protective mucous coating. Although the nematocysts of coral polyps can't do much damage to humans, they have other ways of paying you back: cuts and abrasions from the sharp points and razor edges of stony corals.

Effects:

Burning pain and itchy welts. This "reef rash" (a form of coral poisoning) can take up to six weeks to heal completely.

Rx:

- Scrub area with soap and water. Rinse

SPINES SO FINE: HOW TO KEEP FROM GETTING POKED

Wetsuits provide only limited protection against one of the most dangerous classes of marine creatures—the "stickers." Spines of urchins and stonefish, for example, are capable of easily penetrating 6 mm neoprene or a hard-soled bootie.

Divers and snorkelers need to take several measures to minimize the risk of getting punctured.

Maintain proper buoyancy:

Buoyancy is a skill that has been increasingly stressed to divers in recent years, helping minimize damage to the reef, reducing air consumption, and dramatically lowering the risk of accidentally bumping into, or landing on, a creature that exacts its revenge. If you find it necessary to place a finger down to stabilize yourself for a picture, then make sure to look carefully first to ensure that it is clear of residents. Reef hooks are increasingly being used in areas with swift currents, such as Palau's Blue Corner, where they may serve to limit damage to both reef and diver.

Watch where you step:

Approximately 1,500 people a year are injured by stingrays, while stonefish are among the most poisonous of fishes. Contact with both of these bottom dwellers can be avoided with a little care. Divers should either avoid settling down on the bottom or fan their landing site gently with a fin to encourage any concealed critters to move elsewhere. People walking in shallow water where these fish are known to live should shuffle their feet as they walk. The vibrations will alert bottom dwellers ahead that they should move away.

Don't handle marine life:

This may sound obvious, but a significant number of stings occur while trying to coax, entrap, play with or otherwise manipulate creatures with spines. Marine animals have evolved spines almost exclusively as a defensive measure. If you are a careful and considerate guest in their home, they can be observed without risk to you or them.

stinging wounds with 5 percent vinegar solution or isopropyl alcohol.

- Apply hydrocortisone ointment.
- Get buoyant!

Questions for Dr. Shelanski should be addressed to RSD, Dive Medicine, 6600 Abercorn St., Suite 208, Savannah, GA 31405; e-mail RSDmgzn@aol.com.



Experience the Adventure of the MAYAN COAST



Having a choice is always great. That's what you get when you dive the Mexican Yucatan corridor with Mike Madden's CEDAM dive center. CEDAM now offers direct boat trips to some of the best of Cozumel's walls along with great local reef diving. But the real adventure lies in the jungle, at the mouth of crystal clear fresh water "cenotes". It's a diving experience you'll never forget.

There is a variety of diving options with only one real choice for safety, experience, fun, and adventure.

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BELIZE

(Continued from page 44)

also a last stop of sorts. South of Placencia, there is only the outpost of Monkey River Village and the slightly notorious port village of Punta Gorda.

With more than 400 square miles of reef in the Placencia area alone, and rarely more than two dozen divers visiting the peninsula at one time, you don't need a calculator to figure it out: This is virgin diving territory.

DIVING

Between Placencia Peninsula and the southern reaches of the barrier reef is Belize's vast inner lagoon—a 20-mile-wide holding tank that supports one of only three faro reef systems in the world. These angular and steep-sided "shelf atolls" rise from the continental shelf, not from the seabed, and enclose a central lagoon like the oceanic atolls.

Outside the reef are deeply undercut drop-offs that fall 3,000 feet into the steely, unforgiving blue. Some of the wall's undercuts are so deep they form canyons filled with feral things: king mackerels in the six-foot range, schools of dog snapper and some five-foot cubera snapper. In addition

to vertical walls, the barrier reef's southern portion supports spur-and-groove formations that produce sloping canyons where grouper and snapper come to spawn.

Another of Southern Belize's unique venues is wet cayes. The inner lagoon's soft mud bottom and protected shallow depths allow mangrove seeds to settle and take root miles from the mainland. The result is mangrove cayes ("wet" cayes because they haven't yet formed a solid landmass), growing in the middle of a sea. Like any structure in the open ocean, these cayes are magnets for marine life, especially schools of baitfish and juveniles.

DIVE SITES

There are no pretty tropicals flitting about at Northern Reef Drop-off; it's all open ocean on the outside of the barrier reef. Look for pelagics—greater amberjack, jewfish, king mackerels, and in May and June, whale sharks that come to feed and mate in the days following the full moons.

► In the sandy canyons of Jellyfish Valley, part of a spur-and-groove formation, lie locally abundant upside-down jellyfish. Each hosts a colony of cleaner shrimp and makes a heartbeat-like sound as it flaps to the bottom.

► The faro reef at Lobster Garden drops

from 25 to 110 feet in a series of coral terraces. The spiny crustaceans that give the site its name eye you from every level. In the sandy shallows, look for slippery dicks, razorfish and three types of sea cucumbers.

► The mini-wall at Long Coco Spit begins at 25 feet and drops to a series of coral pinnacles at 75 feet. Along the wall's sheets of plate coral and collage of tube, barrel and vase sponges, you'll find cubera and dog snappers, grouper and hogfish.

► At Murray Long Caye Drop-off, the coral heads rise from 80 feet up to 50 feet to form swim-through canyons that parallel an abysmal 3,000-foot drop-off. Schools of lane snapper feed on shrimp in the mud.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Rum Point Inn is a good choice for serious divers. The rooms in unique concrete cabanas offer privacy, ocean breezes and hot water. Soulshine Resort offers thatched cabanas, a restaurant and swimming pool on a private island. Nautical Inn has new, modern rooms. Kitty's Place is a traditional favorite, offering eight spare but comfortable rooms and apartments in colonial Belizean hardwood structures. More modest accommodations include Turtle Inn, Sonny's Resort, Seaspray Hotel and Singing Sands Inn.



KEYS LUXURY

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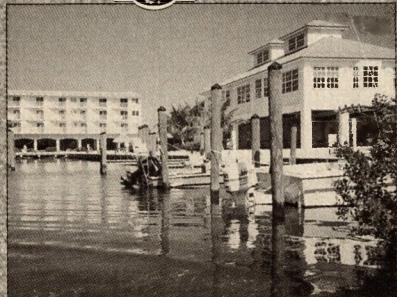
Florida Keys Dive Center

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CoCo View Resort

DIVERS KEEP COMING BACK FOR THIS BAY ISLANDS EXPERIENCE

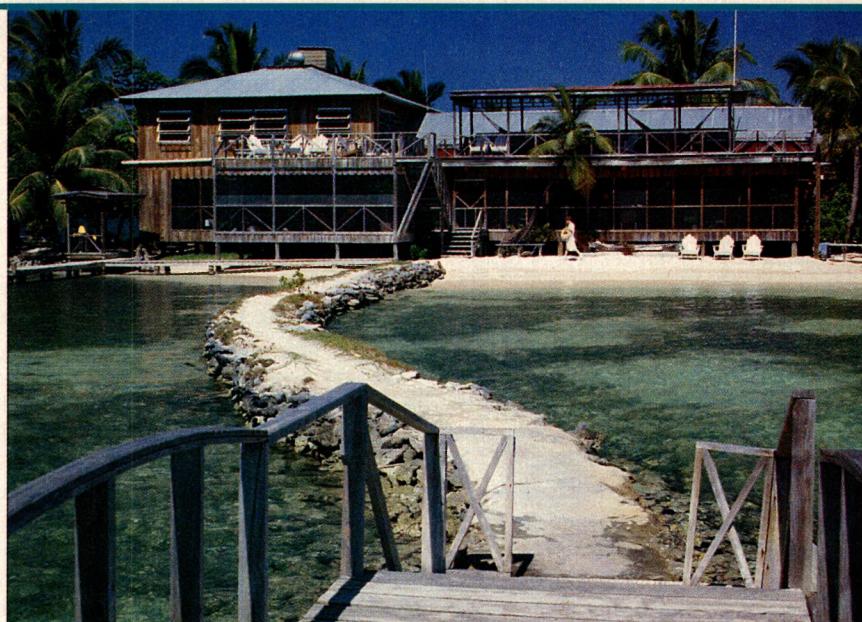
Suppose a dive resort has a large club of members who have vacationed there five times. We'd suspect the resort is something special. Suppose the resort offers a 10th trip free to members who have made nine trips, and a lot of members have qualified for the complimentary vacation. We'd suspect the free trip is not the brass ring. The real prize is obviously the members' experience at the resort, and the experience must be in a class by itself.

Such is the case at CoCo View Resort, where more than 100 divers are 10-trip members of the CoCo Nut Club. What keeps people coming back for this Bay Islands experience? Owners Bill and Evelyn Evans have developed a magic recipe that they cook up over and over to the delight of guests. The ingredients are an admirable blend of Bay Islands welcome, superb diving, comfortable accommodations, tropical atmosphere, attentive service, laid-back organization and satisfying meals.



Whether by boat or from shore, you'll love the convenience of CoCo View diving.

CoCo View is situated on a gem of an islet just off Roatan. The resort's wooden architecture blends with the natural surroundings of the sandy caye. Guest rooms and social areas are cooled by ceiling fans and natural breezes blowing through large screened windows.



This dedicated dive retreat includes nine air-conditioned beach rooms and 16 over-the-water cabanas.

WHERE DIVING CONVENIENCE IS AN ART FORM ►

The resort perches on the corners of two major drop-offs—CoCo View and Newman's walls. Divers spend countless hours

exploring them around the clock. At any time of day or night, grab a buddy and your gear and jump in.

Just kick your fins a few times—you're there. Want to dive a wreck? A few more kicks and you'll reach the Prince Albert, an intact island freighter with cargo holds, companionways and superstructure to explore and photograph.

If you're hankering for boat trips, CoCo View offers one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Step onto a dive boat, and before you know it, you arrive at a breathtaking reef or wall teeming with fish life. After diving, you can rinse and store your gear and shower at the scuba center, right next to the boat docks. Diving doesn't get any more convenient.

For instruction and equipment, stop in at Dockside Dive Center, a PADI 5-Star facility owned and operated by Patty Grier. The center offers a line-up of courses from scuba refresher and discover scuba through divemaster, plus 11 specialties. Patty takes pride in her modern rental gear. She overhauls regulators once a week and maintains one of the best-equipped repair stations in the Caribbean. For underwater photo and video equipment and services, see John Haught at Ocean Images, inside Dockside Dive Center.

BOOK IT ► Roatan Charter—experts in travel to the Bay Islands and Central America—represents CoCo View Resort in North America. Seven nights, \$725 per diver, double occupancy.

Packages include boat and shore diving, meals, accommodations and island transfers. Contact Roatan Charter for reservations and convenient air connections. Phone (800) 282-8932 or (352) 588-4132. Fax (352) 588-4158. E-mail: ccvinfo@roatan.com or <http://www.roatan.com/cocoview.htm>

—Text and Photography by Rob Curran

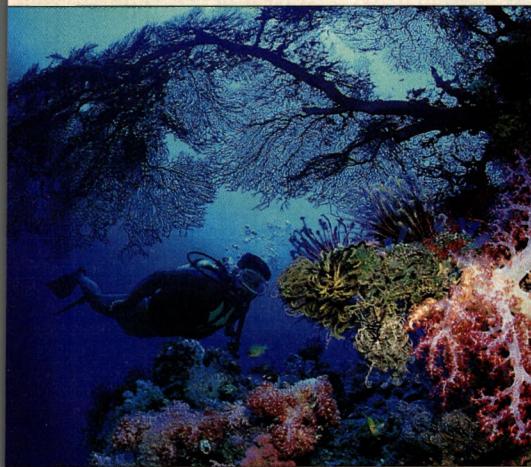
Peter Hughes Diving

A FLEET OF CHANGES FOR 1997

NEW FOR NEW GUINEA ▶

After experiencing the underwater wonders of Papua New Guinea in 1995, Peter Hughes decided to share them with fellow divers. In 1996, Peter acquired a share holding in the *M/V FeBrina*, a 75-foot, 12-passenger live-aboard. Captain Alan Raabe continues at the helm, and the boat will maintain her own unique identity and casual elegance. The *FeBrina* is scheduled for a range of upgrades in January 1997.

STEPHEN FRINK



In January 1997, the *M/V Star Dancer*—formerly Palau's *Sun Dancer*—will join the *FeBrina* in exploring the waters of New Guinea. The 120-foot vessel will accommodate 16 divers in legendary Peter Hughes luxury and comfort. Both *FeBrina* and *Star Dancer* will sail from Walindi Plantation Resort, centrally located on the 300-mile long north coast of New Britain Island. From Walindi, the boats will range west to the Witu Islands and the offshore reefs beyond, and in the east, to Rabaul and the Duke of York Islands. The live-aboard duo provides large groups the opportunity to charter both vessels together.

DANCING THE RED SEA ▶ Egypt topped the lists of the 1996 Rodale's *Scuba Diving Readers' Choice Awards*. In October 1996, the *M/V Moon Dancer*

began carrying 20 divers on luxury-class expeditions to the Red Sea. New for 1997 on *Moon Dancer* are nitrox, nitrox certification, and Draeger/Uwatec Atlantis I rebreather certification and rentals.

A NEW DANCER FOR PALAU ▶

In January 1997, Peter Hughes will raise the bar on his own high standards for live-aboard diving in Palau with the *M/V Sun Dancer II*. The new 135-foot vessel will carry 20 divers in unparalleled comfort. Hughes is adding another "Safe Boat" dive tender to the Palau operation. Divers affectionately dubbed the first tender the "Magic Bus." With the addition of the "Magic Tram," the two 400-horsepower jet-drive Safe Boats will speed 10 passengers each to the reefs and walls. Two tenders will minimize crowding on the reefs while maximizing safety, comfort, convenience and flexibility for divers.

In 1997, packages are expanded to include use of a day room at Palau Pacific Resort on arrival and a room on the final night.

NITROX PROGRAMS ▶ Peter Hughes is committed to improving scuba safety and offering divers the chance to upgrade their skills and master new technologies. Princess Divers in Curaçao and most live-aboards now offer Nitrox programs. Nitrox and certification are available at Princess Divers, and on *Moon Dancer* (Egypt), *Sun Dancer II* (Palau) and *Wave*



Peter Hughes now offers the underwater thrills of Papua New Guinea from the *FeBrina* and *Star Dancer*.



Dancer (Belize). Nitrox fills are free of charge for qualified divers on *Sun Dancer II* and *Wave Dancer*.

ANOTHER BOAT FOR CURAÇAO ▶ The new *Curaçao Duchess*—twin sister to the *Curaçao Princess*—expands the fleet at Princess Divers to three boats. The new addition is a Michael Fitz 41 custom dive boat.

BOOK IT ▶ For reservations and information, contact Peter Hughes Diving, your dive travel specialist or travel agent. Peter Hughes Diving: phone (800) 9-DANCER (932-6237) or (305) 669-9391. Fax (305) 669-9475. E-mail: dancer@winnet.net. Web: <http://www.winnet.net/dancer/>.

—Text by Rob Curran

Paradisus Cozumel

ALL-INCLUSIVE LUXURY FOR COZUMEL DIVERS

You're travel-weary when you arrive at the Paradisus Cozumel, so your smiling concierge bypasses the check-in desk and takes you straight to your room. Over a refreshing welcome drink, your host graciously offers a summary of the dizzying array of options for diving, dining, activities, sports, relaxation and fun at Paradisus.

The five-star resort nestles in lush tropical vegetation along Cozumel's longest natural beach, 300 yards of beckoning white sand and palm trees. Paradisus is located on a sprawling estate in the north hotel zone, just two miles from downtown Cozumel.

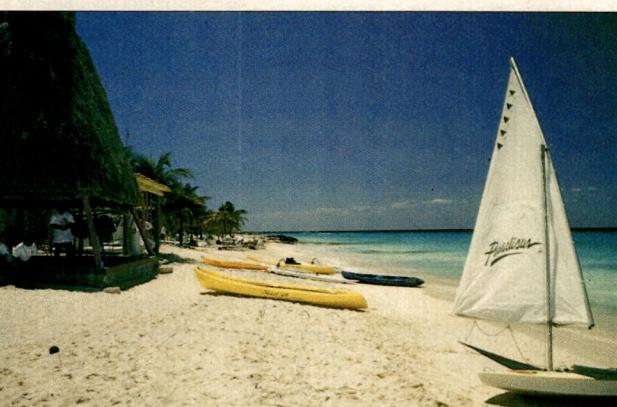
The resort is an attractive blend of contemporary and traditional Mexican Caribbean architecture. Modern lines blend with soft colors and thatched roofs accented by native stones and woods. Each of the 180 rooms has air-conditioning, color satellite TV with HBO and Cinemax, direct-dial phone and private bath. Balconies offer stunning blue-water vistas.

WHAT PRICE PARADISE? ▶ The formula at the Paradisus is all-inclusive. Guests can enjoy a carefree week of fine food and beverage, cocktails, scuba diving, sports, activities and fun without a thought to wallets, credit cards or tips.

Through Dec. 21, 1996, special packages offer Paradisus luxury at substantial savings. A three-night package is \$340; it includes two days of two-tank boat dives. The seven-night package is \$809 and includes five days of diving. (Rates are per person, double occupancy.)



Located on Cozumel's longest natural beach, Paradisus offers vacationers a variety of watersports and activities.



THE DEAL'S A STEAL

FOR KIDS ▶ Two children up to 12 years old can room with parents and enjoy the all-inclusive plan at no extra charge. And Paradisus now features an expanded Kids Club program. The kids team offers non-stop games and learning activities. Parents can enjoy time alone or favorite activities, while chil-

dren have their fun under the watchful eyes of the specially trained Kids Club staff.

WHERE'S THE REEF? ▶

Caribbean Divers offers a range of options for Paradisus guests, whether you're a hard-core scuba diver looking for maximum bottom time, or just trying to squeeze some memorable dives into a vacation with non-diving family and friends. Visit the Caribbean Divers desk in the Paradisus lobby to make your arrangements for charters, night dives, instruction and rentals.

Packages include transportation to the new Paradisus Dive and Beach Club on the southern side of the island. Caribbean Divers operates a full-service scuba center at the club. The location is in the middle of the "dive corridor" for quick access to Cozumel's best reefs and walls. The boat trip to Palancar Reef or Santa Rosa Wall takes 15 minutes.

Roomy, modern Delta dive boats leave for two-tank charters at 9 and 11:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. A small boat is kept on standby for quick one-tank pickup trips—critical mass is five divers.

The club offers flexibility for beach fun and family plans. Combinations are endless: scuba diving, snorkeling, sailing, wind surfing and other beach activities, not to mention free lunch. Best of all, friends and family can enjoy the food and facilities while you're out diving.

BOOK IT ▶ Phone Paradisus at 1-888-341-5993 (toll-free USA/Canada). Or contact your travel agent or dive travel specialist.

—Text and Photography by Rob Curran

The Nekton Pilot

A FOUR-PART FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

Seeking a voyage of discovery, adventure and education in the Bahamas? Throughout the year, the *Nekton Pilot* cruises through the Bahamas on three different itineraries: Bahama Adventure (north), Cay Sal Bank (west) and the southern Bahamas. From November 1996 through April 1997, southern Bahamas cruises depart from picturesque George Town. Destinations include the Exumas, Rum Cay, San Salvador and Conception Island. Divers experience vibrant, pristine reefs and walls, shark feedings and prolific marine life—some of the best in the Caribbean, if not the world. Expect grottoes, tunnels and swim-throughs, submerged pinnacles, and encounters with wild dolphins and sharks. Just ask *Nekton Pilot* veterans—some have come back for five cruises. During November and December 1996, *Nekton Diving Cruises* is offering \$300 savings on selected weeks. Pay \$1,095 (regularly \$1,395).

It's often said: "A live-aboard is only as good as the diving it gets you to." When a live-aboard delivers world-class diving—10 on an international scale of 10—what can an operator do to increase passengers' satisfaction? Just ask the operators of the *Nekton Pilot*.

First, design a one-of-a-kind boat from the keel(s) up—just for divers and their comfort. SWATH (Small Waterplane Area Twin Hull) is a radical vessel technology. It dramatically reduces rocking, rolling and seasickness. The *Nekton Pilot* travels serenely across rough seas and rides calmly at anchor in choppy waters. Each roomy passenger cabin features large six-square-foot windows with wide-angle ocean views, air-conditioning and an option for queen bed or twin beds. In each cabin, a large private bathroom offers a full-sized shower stall and electric toilet.

The *Nekton Pilot* offers the amenities and comfort of a cruise ship, the mobility of a yacht and stability



The Nekton Pilot's formula for success includes a state-of-the-art dive platform and the amenities of a cruise ship.

Nekton Pilot cruise. Five members of the family received their open-water certifications. Talk about a unique family reunion!

approaching a land-based resort.

Second, add a full-time Activities Director for each cruise, and staff the *Nekton Pilot* with experts in marine biology and photography. Between the five dives a day, offer a lineup of free presentations: scuba refresher; snorkeling; buoyancy control; introductions to underwater photography and video; fish and coral identification; history and underwater geology of the Bahamas; ocean pollution; blue holes; sharks and turtles. Make the presentations fun, educational, interesting and entertaining. It's the *Nekton Pilot* formula: education + awareness = respect + enjoyment.

Third, offer open-water certification at no charge. Students can begin training at hometown dive centers and finish on the *Nekton Pilot* with their check-out dives. In June 1996, 10 members—three generations—of a family sailed on their second

Fourth, provide a state-of-the-art dive platform, a nine-foot-wide deck that runs the width of the *Nekton Pilot's* 40-foot beam. The crew lowers the entire platform to sea level for safe, quick entries and exits.

Divers set up their gear once at their stations during the week. After dives, the crew quickly refills tanks-without detaching BCs. Personal gear is stored in individual lockers an arm's length from the diver's seat.

BOOK IT ► Contact *Nekton*, your dive travel specialist or travel agent. Round-trip air charters from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., to George Town, \$260. Phone (800) UW WORLD or (954) 463-9324. E-mail: *nekton1@aol.com*. Check out *Nekton's* home page at: <http://www.gate.net/~nekton/>.

—Text by Rob Curran

Fiesta Americana Cozumel Reef and Dive House

A FIVE-STAR LUXURY RESORT WITH A WORLD-CLASS SCUBA CENTER

From the moment you set foot in the lobby of Fiesta Americana Cozumel Reef, you begin to appreciate what the resort is all about: the ultimate in comfort, service, convenience and laid-back tropical luxury for divers.

In Spring 1996, the resort added 14 exquisite thatched-roofed casitas—villas—designed for divers, behind the main hotel. The villas nestle in local flowers and greenery—a peaceful, natural environment. In decor and appointments, the designers overlooked no detail of luxury or comfort.

From a diver's perspective, the best thing about the resort is the in-house dive operation, Dive House. The quality of their equipment and personnel is state-of-the-art—and second to none in Cozumel. And you can speed to Cozumel's best

walls and reefs—Palancar, Santa Rosa, Tormentos—in 10 to 30 minutes.

For an additional \$10 per day, a diver can upgrade to the "Personalized Diving Service." This option provides a dive boat which takes a maximum of six divers, with boat captain and dive guide. This is valuable to experienced divers looking for "exotic" dive sites, and to beginner divers who want extra personal attention.

BOOK IT ► Contact Island Dreams for special packages and airfares. From Sept. 4 to Dec. 20, 1996, three nights lodging/two days boat diving, \$229 pp/do. Seven nights/six days diving,



There's room to spread out on Dive House I, II & III which are roomy, fast and custom-built for diving.

\$599 pp/do. For information or reservations, phone (800) 346-6116 or (713) 973-9300. World Wide Web: <http://www.islandream.com/island/index.htm> E-mail: info@islandream.com

RESORT PROFILE

BAHAMAS

Small Hope Bay Lodge

GREAT BAHAMAS DIVING AND SIMPLE LUXURIES

Your reality in the land of perpetual winter: It's 6 a.m. and it's happening again. The snow flies under gray skies. The cold winds howl. You're fighting a losing battle to shovel eight inches of drifting snow from your driveway before you have to skid and shiver to work on icy roads.

Alternate reality, in the land of perpetual June, Small Hope Bay Lodge: At 6 a.m., you decide to roll out of bed to salute the Bahamian sun that's already gently warming Andros Island. What's it going to be today? The choices are tough: Dive some offshore or inland blue holes? Make a two-tank boat trip to impressive Andros Wall? Laze your way through another day on the beach with a Goombay Smash or two (or three)? Bike to town to chat with some of the friendly locals? Stalk some

bonefish in Andros's maze of flats? Spincast for grouper? Go deep-sea fishing for big game? Or wile away some hours with a sailboard, sailboat or nature walk? Hard choices.

Small Hope Bay Lodge—a dedicated dive resort—features 20 beachfront cottages, dining room, cocktail bar, game room, boutique and hot tub. The atmosphere is out-island simplicity: laid-back, down home and downright friendly.

BOOK IT ► Dive packages include accommodations, meals, bar drinks, and three dives a day, plus airport transfers, hotel taxes and service charges. Winter rates: diver, \$220 per person per night; vacationer, \$165. Children 2-12: \$40 per night. Teens 13-17: \$80 per night.



Bahamasair services Andros Town Airport from Nassau daily. Or fly from Fort Lauderdale on the resort's own Aero Commanders for \$200 roundtrip. Phone (800) 223-6961 or (809) 368-2013.

—Text by Rob Curran

Plaza Resort Bonaire Hotel-Villas & Casino

A DIVER'S DELIGHT ON BONAIRE

As one of the world's top dive destinations, Bonaire attracts new divers and lures veterans back for more—again and again.

At the Plaza Resort Bonaire Hotel-Villas and Casino, you'll find everything you would expect a Five-Star resort to offer plus easy access to Bonaire's incredible diving. Located on a beautiful beach, Plaza Resort Bonaire can please a variety of tastes and budgets with 200 spacious suites and villas in the main two-story complex and 24 palatial villas at the resort's sister property, Port Bonaire. All rooms feature private balconies and sweeping views of the ocean, garden or lagoon. For your dining, drinking and entertainment pleasure there are three restaurants, three

bars, an exciting casino and a dazzling seaside pool.

The on-site Toucan Diving facility's dive boats depart daily for Bonaire's hottest dive spots. Guided tours are available to the east coast of the island and to Washington-Slagbaai National Park. Toucan Diving offers all levels of dive instruction through instructor level and is equipped with one of the largest photo facilities in the Caribbean. Underwater camera and video rentals are available as well as E-6 and print processing. Toucan's photo pros can help you take that first underwater photo or improve your skills.



BOOK IT ► Dive, explore and dance the night away, Plaza Resort Bonaire has it all! For more information or to make reservations, call today, (800) 766-6016 or 617-821-1012.

RESORT PROFILE

CAYMAN BRAC

Peter Hughes Diving/ Divi Tiara Beach Resort

Service, reliability and the best diving possible have always been the trademarks of Peter Hughes Dive Tiara at Divi Tiara Beach Resort on Cayman Brac, so how could things possibly get better?

Well, \$400,000 in new equipment and renovations will do that. Two of Dive Tiara's five custom dive boats were outfitted with faster engines and marine toilets, and all five were refurbished and repainted, freshwater showers were added and the camera tables were improved. At the same time, many of the guest rooms were upgraded with new TVs and air-conditioners.

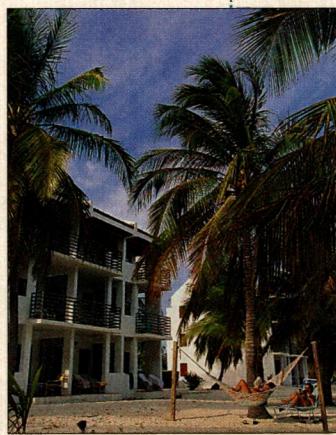
Yet, amazingly, the cost of diving this winter at Divi Tiara Beach Resort will be less. It's the first resort in the Cayman Islands to charge the same price year-round, even

during the winter peak season. The one exception is Christmas and New Year's, when there is a modest surcharge.

Dive equipment is picked up from your room on arrival, set up, tested and rinsed daily, then returned right before your departure. With five 38-foot to 40-foot dive boats visiting different sites, you will see the best of Cayman Brac and nearby Little Cayman, which is dived frequently, weather permitting. Rental equipment here is tops: 20 new Sea Quest units, new

underwater video systems and 14 Nikons rental units with numerous lens options.

After diving, food is what counts most. Three buffets daily feature local standouts like conch stew but there's also plenty of American-style fare. Lunch offers a full salad bar for the health-conscious. On the dessert menu, the legendary Chocolate Suicide Cake remains a luscious favorite. Some things just can't be improved upon.



BOOK IT ► Reserve a seven-night minimum stay and get one night free. The basic rate for room and diving starts at \$648 pp/do from Saturday to Saturday. Call (800) 367-3484 or (919) 419-3484.

FREE DIVE INFO

Simply tear out the reply card, circle the numbers preceding the names of the companies which interest you, fill out your name and address, affix postage, and drop it in the mailbox. You'll soon be receiving information which will help make your diving more enjoyable!

DIVE DESTINATIONS

ARUBA

1. AIR ARUBA 1-800-677-7888
2. ARUBA TOURISM 1-800-TO-ARUBA
3. PELICAN WATERSPORTS 011-2978-24739
4. RED SAIL SPORTS/ARUBA 1-800-255-6425
5. SCUBA ARUBA 011-2978-34142
6. UNIQUE SPORTS OF ARUBA 011-2978-6009

AUSTRALIA

7. DIVE DISCOVERY/REEF EXPLORER 1-800-886-7321

See ad pg. 31
See ad pg. 31

BAHAMAS

8. BAHAMAS OUT ISLANDS PROMOTION BOARD 1-800-688-4752
9. DIVE ABAKO 1-800-247-5338
10. GRAND BAHAMA ISLAND TOURISM/UNEXSO 1-800-992-DIVE (3483)
11. LUCAYAN BEACH/UNEXSO 1-800-992-DIVE (3483)
12. SMALL HOPE BAY LODGE 1-800-223-6961
13. STELLA MARIS 1-800-426-9466
14. STUART COVE'S DIVE SOUTH OCEAN 1-800-646-3333
15. SUNSKIFF 1-800-331-5884
16. UNEXSO 1-800-992-DIVE (3483)
17. VALENTINE'S DIVE CENTER 1-800-383-6480
18. WALKER'S CAY 1-800-513-5257

See ad pg. 114

BAY ISLANDS/HONDURAS

19. ANTHONY'S KEY RESORT 1-800-227-3483
20. BAY ISLANDS BEACH RESORT 1-800-4-ROATAN
21. BAYMAN BAY CLUB 1-800-524-1823
22. FANTASY ISLAND BEACH RESORT 1-800-676-2826
23. HONDURAS INSTITUTE OF TOURISM 1-800-410-9608
24. LAGUNA BEACH RESORT 1-800-668-8452
25. POSADA DEL SOL/INN OF THE SUN 1-800-642-3483
26. ROATAN CHARTER, INC. 1-800-282-8932
27. UTILA REEF RESORT 1-800-263-9876

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See ad pg. 28
See ad pg. 25
See ad pg. 05
See ad pg. 28
See ad pg. 33
See ad pg. 37
See ad pg. 115

BELIZE

28. ADVENTURES IN WATERSPORTS 1-800-648-8990
29. BELIZE DIVE TOURS 1-800-938-0860
30. BELIZE TOURIST BOARD 1-800-624-0686
31. BOTTOM TIME DIVE SHOP/BZ TRAVEL SERVICES 1-800-382-7776
32. JOURNEY'S END 1-800-460-5665
33. RAMON'S VILLAGE 1-800-624-4215
34. RUM POINT INN 1-800-747-1381
35. SOULSHINE RESORT 1-800-890-6082
36. WINDY HILL RESORT 1-800-WINDY 95

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See ad pg. 46
See ad pg. 46
See ad pg. 46

BERMUDA

37. BERMUDA WRECK TOUR 1-800-BDA-DIVE

See ad pg. 66

BONAIRE

38. DIVI RESORTS 1-800-367-3484
39. PLAZA RESORTS BONAIRE 1-800-766-6016
40. SAND DOLLAR CONDOMINIUM RESORT 1-800-288-4773
41. TOURISM CORPORATION OF BONAIRE 1-800-U-BONAIRE

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See ad pg. 35
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COZUMEL

42. BLUE BUBBLE DIVERS 1-800-878-8853
43. DIVE PARADISE 1-800-308-5125
44. DIVE TOURS/DIAMOND/DIVE PALANCAR 1-800-433-0885
45. REEF & RAINFOREST WORLDWIDE ADVENTURE TRAVEL 1-800-794-98NR
46. TROPICAL TOURS INC. 1-800-711-4700

See ad pg. 113
See ad pg. 22
See ad pg. 58
See ad pg. 115
See ad pg. 67

FJII

47. AQUA TREK DIVE TRAVEL SERVICE* 1-800-541-4334

See ad pg. 20W

FLORIDA KEYS

48. AQUA NUTS/KELLY'S ON THE BAY 1-800-226-0415
49. CONCH REPUBLIC DIVERS 1-800-274-DIVE
50. DISCOVERY DIVE 1-800-622-6813
51. FLORIDA KEYS DIVE CENTER 1-800-433-8946
52. KEY WEST DIVERS 1-800-87-DIVER
53. LOOE KEY REEF RESORT 1-800-942-5397

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HAWAII

55. ECO-ADVENTURES 1-800-949-3483

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MEXICO

57. CEDAM DIVE CENTERS 011-52-987-35129
58. BONNE TERRE MINE 1-314-731-5003

See ad pg. 100
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MIDWEST

59. DIVE DISCOVERY/ADVENTURE SPORTS GIZO 1-800-886-7321
60. DIVE DISCOVERY/BILIKIKI CRUISES LTD 1-800-886-7321
61. DIVE DISCOVERY/SAM'S DIVE TOURS 1-800-886-7321
62. SPLASH 1-800-247-3483

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See ad pg. 113
See ad pg. 113

PACIFIC

63. AQUATIC UNDERWATER ADV. 1-787-890-6071
64. CARIBBEAN SCHOOL OF AQUATICS 1-787-728-6606
65. CARIBE AQUATIC ADVENTURES 1-787-724-1882
66. CORAL HEAD DIVERS 1-800-635-4529
67. PALOMINO DIVERS/EL CONQUISTADOR RESORT 1-800-468-5228
68. PARGUERA DIVERS 1-787-899-4015
69. PUERTO RICO TOURISM 1-800-866-7827

See ad pg. C2
See ad pg. GATES 1 & 2

TOBAGO

70. TIDCO 1-800-595-ITNT

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UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

71. ANCHOR DIVE CENTER 1-800-532-DIVE
72. LOW KEY WATERSPORTS 1-800-835-7718
73. UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS 1-800-372-USVI
74. V.I. DIVERS 1-800-524-0410

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75. D.A.N. 1-800-446-2671
76. OCEAN CORPORATION 1-800-321-0298
77. PDIC INTERNATIONAL 1-717-342-9434
78. PRO DIVE 1-800-772-DIVE

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DIVE EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

DIVE EQUIPMENT

80. OCEAN MASTER 1-800-841-7007
81. UWATEC 1-800-951-DIVE (3483)

See ad pg. C3
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DIVE TRAVEL SPECIALIST

83. BAHIA TOURS 1-800-443-0717
84. RASCALS IN PARADISE 1-800-U-RASCAL
85. TROPICAL ADVENTURES TRAVEL 1-800-247-3483

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See ad pg. 115
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MISCELLANEOUS

86. DIVE CALENDAR 1-800-367-7008
87. IDENTITY CHECK PRINTERS
82. THE HENNESSEY GROUP, INC. 1-617-647-2888

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LIVE-ABOARDS

88. AGGRESSOR FLEET 1-800-348-2628
89. EXPLORER VENTURES LTD 1-800-322-3577
90. NEKTON DIVING CRUISES 1-800-899-6753 EXT. ROD
91. OCEANWIDE EXPEDITIONS/REMBRANDT 1-800-453-SAIL (7245)
92. WINDJAMMER BAREFOOT CRUISES 1-800-327-2601

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PHOTOGRAPHY

93. BERGER BROS. CAMERA & VIDEO 1-800-262-4160
94. IKELITE 1-317-923-4523
95. PIONEER RESEARCH 1-800-257-7742
96. SEA & SEA UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY 1-800-SEA-7977
97. UNDERWATER PHOTO TEC 1-603-432-1997

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SPECIAL SECTION CAYMAN ISLANDS

98. BRAC REEF BEACH RESORT 1-800-327-3835
99. COCONUT HARBOUR 1-800-552-6281
100. DIVI RESORTS 1-800-367-3484
101. TREASURE ISLAND DIVERS 1800-872-7552

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SPECIAL SECTION MICRONESIA

102. CONTINENTAL MICRONESIA 1-800-900-7657
103. FISH 'N FINS 011-680-488-2637
104. MANTA RAY BAY HOTEL & YAP DIVERS 011-691-350-2300 OR 1-800-DIVE-YAP
105. PACTOURS 1-800-245-4129
106. PALAU DIVING CENTER/CARP ISLAND RESORT 011-680-488-2978
107. PALAU PACIFIC RESORT 011-680-488-2600
108. PALAU VISITORS AUTHORITY 011-680-488-2793
109. PETER HUGHES 1-800-932-6237
110. PONHPEI TOURIST COMMISSION 011-691-320-2421 EXT. R.O.D.
111. POSEIDON VENTURES 1-800-854-9334
112. SAM'S DIVE TOURS 1-800-794-98NR
113. SEAWARD HOLIDAYS/S.S. THORFINN 011-691-330-4302
114. SUNDANCE TOURS & DIVE SHOP 011-691-330-4234
115. THE CAROLINES RESORT 011-680-488-3754/55
116. TRIP-N-TOUR MICRONESIA 1-800-348-0842
117. TRUK STOP HOTEL 011-691-330-4232
118. YAP STATE TOURISM OFFICE 011-691-350-2298

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SUBJECT TO CHANGE
*REGIONAL ADS APPEAR IN THIS ISSUE ONLY
(MIDWEST - MW, SOUTH - S, WEST - W)

The Rainbow Hunter

THE WORLD'S FIRST FLYING LIVE-ABOARD

It hardly seems possible, but very soon Micronesia's already diverse diving options will be even greater. In December, the *Rainbow Hunter*, a six-passenger Grumman Albatross Seaplane, will begin operation, marking a new era in live-aboard diving.

Defying all previously known boundaries, the *Rainbow Hunter* will be offering cutting edge exploratory dive charters to Ulithi, Ngulu and Helen's Reef—remote and otherwise inaccessible atolls off Palau and Yap. The diving here is the best Micronesia has to offer, without the crowds—brilliant drop-offs and spine-tingling big animal action.

Boat expeditions to these reefs from Palau and Yap involve almost a day of travel each way. Traveling at a speed of



Be among the first to experience Micronesia diving from this flying live-aboard.

275 miles per hour, the *Rainbow Hunter* can reach the same reefs in under an hour. Charters depart from Palau and arrive in the scenic shelter of a deserted island lagoon where the *Rainbow Hunter* makes its aquatic transformation from plane to boat. Furnished with six berths, a TV, two showers and a dining area, accommodations are clean, cozy and basic. A seaplane expedition is best

regarded as "advanced camping," and definitely not for everyone. However, for those with a yearning in their soul to push the envelope, the *Rainbow Hunter* offers what is perhaps the ultimate diving adventure.

BOOK IT ► Starting Dec. 28, 1996, the *Rainbow Hunter* will be offering six-day charters, including five-and-a-half days of virtually unlimited diving for \$5,995 per person. For more information or to make reservations, contact See & Sea Travel. Their travel experts can arrange air transfers and land accommodations as well as extended stays on Palau, Chuuk or Yap. Phone: (800) DIV-XPRT or (415) 434-3400, fax (415) 434-3409, e-mail: divxprt@ix.netcom.com or <http://www.divxprt.com/see&sea>.

RESORT PROFILE

MICRONESIA

Yap Divers

and Manta Ray Bay Hotel

MANTA MADNESS

In nature, there are very few sure bets, especially under water. Yap is the exception to this rule. Spend four days diving here and you're virtually guaranteed manta encounters. In 1989, manta ray cleaning stations, where divers could observe dozens of these gentle giants, were discovered by Bill Acker, owner of Manta Ray Bay Hotel and Yap Divers. In Mil Channel, trains of mantas often parade by. The dependability of this extraordinary phenomenon has catapulted Yap to diving fame.

Certainly, the mantas are Yap's main underwater fascination, but that's definitely not the end of the story. Scattered around the island's 90-mile perimeter are more than 30 dive sites, including

dramatic drop-offs and fish-filled caverns.

Manta Ray Bay Hotel and Yap Divers are located side by side on a peaceful lagoon. The resort's 23 rooms are furnished with all the amenities divers need. The hotel's restaurant offers an awesome view and world-class island cuisine. Yap Divers' five dive boats provide comfort, convenience and maximum flexibility. Manta Visions Photo and Video Center is the newest addition. Located in the lobby of the hotel, the center offers camera and video rentals and repairs, photo and video instruction, editing, E-6 processing and custom videos.

BOOK IT ► Yap's enchanting culture is several thousand years old; villagers dress in traditional garb and mammoth



sculpted stone disks are still used as the local currency. Yap offers divers a travel experience that comes along only once in a lifetime, and it's a free stopover on the way to or from Palau. For information or to make reservations, contact Bill Acker in Yap: phone 011-691-350-2300, fax 011-691-350-4567 or 350-3841. E-mail: yapdivers@mantaray.com. Home page: <http://www.mantaray.com>.

The S.S. *Thorfinn*

GATEWAY TO TRUK'S WRECK HEAVEN

So many wrecks, so little time—the dilemma of Truk Lagoon. Luckily, there is a solution. Perched at the rim, the 170-foot *S.S. Thorfinn*—the world's largest dive cruiser—provides unlimited access to Truk Lagoon's coral-garnished graveyard.

There are at least 60 wrecks from the Japanese Imperial fleet littering the bottom of Chuuk's famed Truk Lagoon, and 45 have been discovered. Warm, nutrient-rich currents, protected conditions and more than 50 years have combined to create oases of coral. Soft coral forests are just icing on the cake, encasing a treasure trove of war artifacts. The *S.S. Thorfinn*'s four dive tenders and hourly departures make it possible for divers to explore as many as 30 of Truk's wrecks during a one-week charter. Wall

diving is optional.

In January, the *S.S. Thorfinn* returned to Chuuk after undergoing a million-dollar re-fit and upgrade. All 11 staterooms were redecorated and feature TV/VCRs and air-conditioning; 8 of the staterooms have both queen-sized and single beds and private baths. A saltwater aquarium is now the centerpiece of the main lounge area.

The ship was redesigned with photographers in mind: camera tables were extended and the service department was expanded; both camera and video rentals are offered. A professional photo pro is always on hand and E-6 processing is available.



BOOK IT ► The *S.S. Thorfinn* offers weekly charters within Truk Lagoon and, upon request, extended charters to the outer atolls and islands. For more information, call your favorite dive travel professional or contact the *S.S. Thorfinn* direct c/o Seaward Holidays Micronesia Inc., phone (011) 691-330-3040, fax (011) 691-330-4253, ship's phone (011) 691-330-4302. E-mail: newhomes@inlink.com or <http://www.inmax.com/thorfinn>.

Reef Explorer:

DIVE WAY OFF THE BEATEN TRACK DOWN UNDER

Few live-aboards based in Australia regularly sail far enough north along the Great Barrier Reef to reach Thursday Island, just south of Papua New Guinea. This remote Far North area is hailed as one of the Seven Underwater Wonders of the World.

Over the past seven years, Allan and Kim Payard have ranged the waters of the Far North with their live-aboard *Reef Explorer*. The owner/operators have developed a treasure trove of dive experiences: Rich, wild and untamed reefs and shipwrecks teem with sea life. Sharks and brilliant hard corals and gorgonians lace current-swept entrances to lagoons. Clouds of shimmering fusiliers engulf huge bommies, or pinnacles.

The 65-foot *Reef Explorer* accommodates 10 passengers in five air-conditioned cabins. The crew's "we aim to



please" attitude imbues all aspects of shipboard life: personalized diving, friendly service and food prepared to perfection.

The *Reef Explorer* caters to experienced divers and underwater photographers with four unregimented dives a day. You're free to dive to your level of training and ability under the crew's unobtrusive guidance. Crew members specialize in providing countless opportunities and advice for once-in-a-lifetime underwater shots.

BOOK IT ► Packages include 12-day Far Northern Extended Trips for \$2995. The *Reef Explorer* also explores The Outer Coral Sea—8-day packages are \$1900. The best months to dive the Far North are October through January, so contact Dive Discovery today. Phone (800) 886-7321 or (415) 256-8890. E-mail: 102447.3320@compuserve.com Internet: <http://www.netilus.com/DiveDiscovery>

—Text by Rob Curran

CLASSIFIEDS

AUSTRALIA

EX CAIRNS TO THE GBR - Specializing in day trips, Nitrox & rebreather courses, accommodated dive packages, customized live-aboard charters. Cnr. The Esplanade & Aplin St., Cairns, Qld., Australia 4870. Ph: 6170-31-1248, fax 6170-31-5221. E-mail: tusa@c130.aone.net.au, home page: <http://www.abcaus.com/mail/tusa/index.htm>.

PRO DIVE CAIRNS - GREAT BARRIER REEF - 3 day/2 night live-aboard cruises to the outer reef 4 times weekly. 17 dives Au \$375.00 - U.S. \$280.00. PADI 5-Star IDC Beginner - Instructor courses. Day trips daily. Cod Hole & Coral Sea twice weekly. Ph Int'l+6170 315255 - Fax Int'l+6170 519955.

TAKA DIVE - "The Friendly Alternative." Regular live-aboard dive trips to the COD HOLE on *Taka II* & CORAL SEA on *Taka III*. Ph. Aussie direct 1-800-241-7690, fax 6170-312739.

BAHAMAS

BRITISH COLONIAL/SUN DIVERS - 1-800-258-4786. Great 4 day/3 night packages starting at \$278 p.p. Free non-motorized water sports, private beach. Leave from our dock, one 2-tank dive daily (2 days), tanks, weights & belt.

BARBADOS

HIGHTIDE WATERSPORTS - Small groups, personalized service. Fast custom boat, PADI Resort member, u/w photo, all watersports. Phone/fax 809-432-0931.

BAY ISLANDS, HONDURAS

REEF HOUSE RESORT/MAYAN VIP TOURS - Dive Roatan's resplendent reef, non-diver activities. Mayan Ruins, adventure, tropical tours on mainland Honduras. 1-800-328-8897.

ROATAN - Secluded beach house w/private dock, fully furnished, 3BR, 2BA, sun deck. Easy access to diving. 303-420-1187.

ROATAN/CENTRAL AMERICA - Best dive resorts, live-aboards in Bay Islands & Costa Rica. Special airfare packages, individuals or groups. 1-800-367-5960.

ROATAN RESORTS - From \$599, full week w/meals & diving. Best diving, resorts, live-aboards, airfare, beach house rentals. 1-800-392-6292.

ROATAN TRAVEL SPECIALIST - Roatan, Belize & beyond. Wide selection of budget to luxury dive resorts & live-aboards. Call the Roatan leader. LANDFALL ADV. TRVL, U.S./CANADA 1-800-525-3833, CA 510-794-1599.

BELIZE

BELIZE DIVE PACKAGES - For individuals & groups. Aggressive pricing. Economy to luxury, land or live-aboard. Special airfare packages. 1-800-367-5960. oceanus@psln.com.

BELIZE'S PREMIER DIVE FACILITY - Reef dives, Blue Hole trips. Hotel/dive packages starting at \$300. Gaz's Belize Dive Center. 1-800-938-0860.

KITTY'S PLACE, Placencia, Belize. Beach resort. Custom dive packages. Virtually untouched reef. Toll free: 1-888-HI-KITTY (1-888-445-4889). Fax: 011-501-62-3226. E-mail: kittys@btl.net

SAINT GEORGE'S LODGE - Top-quality diving. Resort thru Nitrox certifications. Weekly packages from \$1,349.00. Arrive/depart ANY DAY. Excellent food & accommodations. 011-501-212121, 1-800-678-6871.

TURNEFFE FLATS - Quality, personalized diving from our private resort on the Turneffe Atoll, the Heart of Belize's best diving. Please call for details. 1-800-815-1304/ 605-578-1304.

BONAIRE

BRUCE BOWKER'S CARIB INN - P.O. Box 68, Bonaire, N.A. All sites, air, sales, rentals, PADI 5-Star full instruction. All rooms A/C, TV, pool. Phone 011-5997-8819 8 am - 5 pm, fax 011-5997-5295 24 hrs., E-mail: 75317, 667@compuserve.com.

HAPPY HOLIDAY HOMES - P.O. Box 216. Clean, affordable, 1, 2, & 3 A/C BR bungalows, full kitchen, microwave, cable TV, hot shower, garden, quiet location. 011-5997-8405, 011-5997-8605.

TOWNHOUSE ON THE BEACH - 2BR/3BA, great shore/boat diving. Dive shop close by, snorkel & windsurf, too. Phone/fax 516-694-3430.

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

BLUE WATER DIVERS - P.O. Box 846, Road Town, Tortola, BVI. Mike & Keith Royle, PADI instructors. Dive tours, intro courses, rentals, air fills, rendezvous. Phone 809-494-2847, fax 809-494-0198.

DIVE BVI LTD. - W/4 convenient locations in the BVI. Hotel & dive packages available starting as low as \$665/pp for a 7-night/5-day diving package. Call direct for information or reservations. 1-800-848-7078.

CAYMAN ISLANDS

CAYMAN BRAC BARGAINS! Deluxe beachfront vacation homes/condos. 7 nights/5 days fantastic diving from \$452/diver. Call Jim, Brac Vacation Specialist since 1987. 1-800-972-9795.

CAYMAN BRAC LUXURIOUS VALUE - Spacious 2BR condos on white sand beach. Palm trees, restaurant, pool, friendly people. Ideal location, terrific value, dive packages from \$670/diver, quad occupancy. Free brochure. Brac Caribbean Beach Village, Box 4-R, Stake Bay, Cayman Brac, BWI; toll free 1-800-791-7911, fax 809-948-1111.

CAYMAN BREEZE - LUXURY VACATION CONDO. 2/2 ocean - beachfront, pool, Northside adjacent Cayman Kai. Pristine diving. From \$1,100/wk. 813-854-1201, caymanbrz@aol.com.

CAYMAN DIVING LODGE on Grand Cayman's East End. Gateway to Grand Cayman's East End since 1972. Experience the best diving in the Cayman Islands! Inclusive dive vacation packages. All services (dive operation, dining, bar, hotel) located on-site at our small, secluded beachfront dedicated diving lodge. Get away from the crowds & experience the Cayman of Yesterday. We guarantee the best value in the Cayman Islands. Call anytime! 800-TLC-DIVE. U.S. & Canada, fax 806-798-7568.

GRAND CAYMAN'S NEW FRONTIER - Dive East End w/Ocean Frontiers. Virgin diving, small groups, new boat. 7 nights/6 days diving (12 dives) \$555 p.p./d.o. 809-947-7500, <http://www.OceanFrontiers.com> or 1-800-544-6576.

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BILL BEARD'S DIVING SAFARIS - Largest, oldest operation. Great resorts, pkgs. & prices. Dive Bat, Catalina Islands. 1-800-779-0055, fax 612-931-0209, E-mail: rep@godiving.com.

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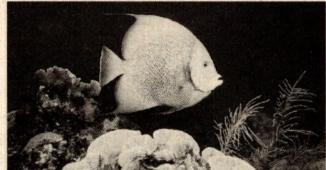
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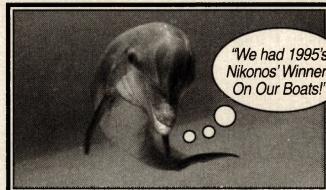
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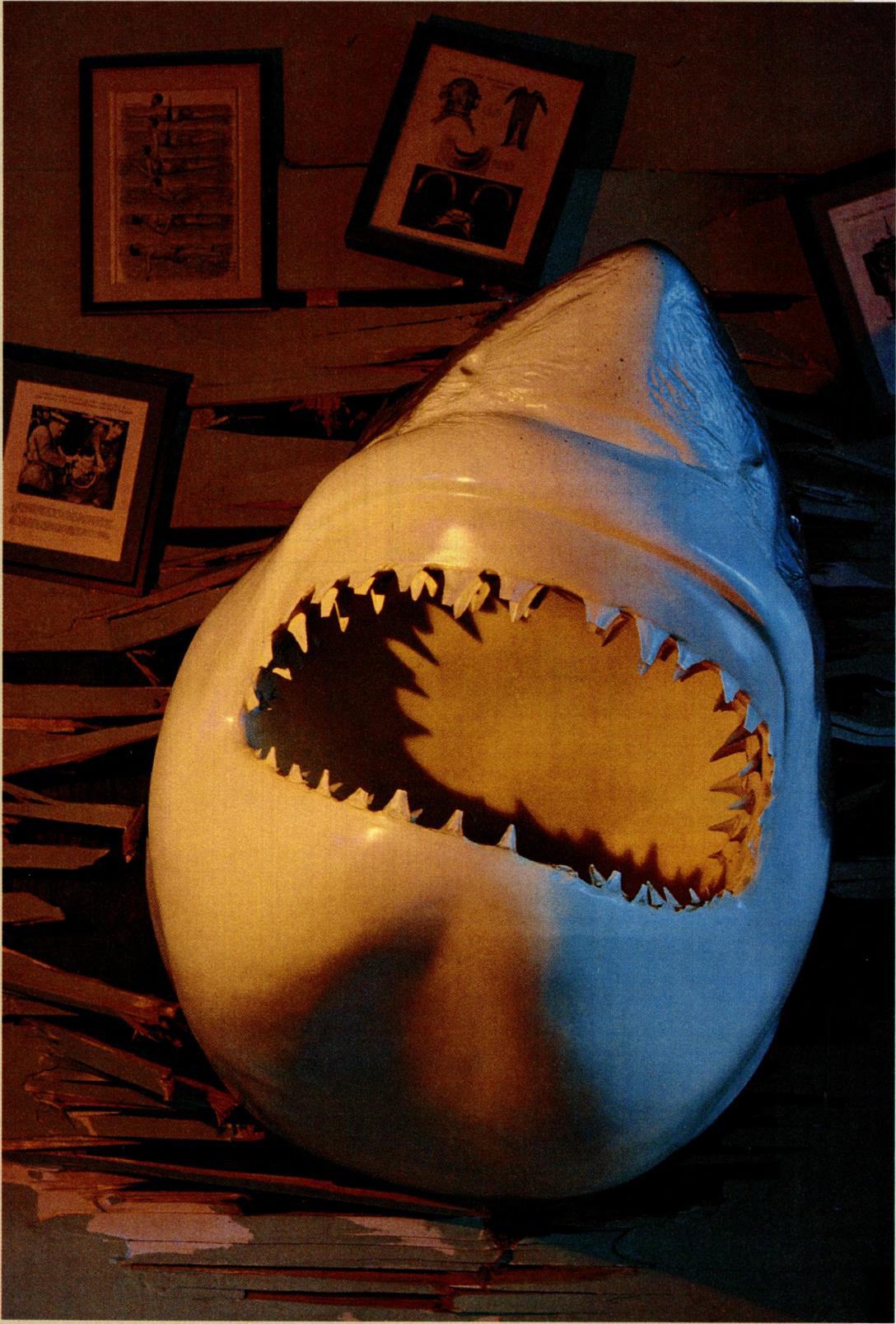
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FAR HORIZON

An RSD Contest

Where in the dive world are you?



A mere 100 miles from Hollywood, this dive facility has probably seen more celebrities—including this permanent fixture—than any other. Walter Cronkite learned to dive here, Jacques Mayol trained here, Lloyd Bridges vacationed here, Orson Welles filmed here and Peter Benchley pondered the deep here.

The town where this dive facility is located was built to be the center of commerce on an island where, until sport diving exploded, lumbering and fishing were the primary industries. This island is the fourth largest in its chain.

The facility is chock-full of superlatives: home of the first formal resort course, first organized night diving, first sport decompression diving and first dolphin encounter. The octopus regulator was developed here, and the facility boasts the area's only recompression chamber.

When it opened its doors to the dive community, Sonny and Cher's "I've Got You Babe" was blasting from almost every radio in America. Cassius Clay was the heavyweight champion of the world. And, a new Studebaker set you back about \$2,200.

Where in the dive world are you?

To enter, identify this dive facility. Write your answer on a postcard with your name, address and telephone number, and send it to: "Where in the Dive World Contest," RSD, 6600 Abercorn St., Suite 208, Savannah, GA 31405. Correct answers will be entered in a Grand Prize drawing to be held in December 1996. The winner will receive a dive vacation for two to one of the destinations featured in the contest.

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Purge at bottom of mask clears water completely. No water residual. The Equalizer's advanced low profile purge system exposes the nose pocket, allowing one handed equalization even with a regulator in your mouth.

Choose from a wide selection of mask styles: the four window Z4 (above), the two window Z2, aviator-look Provision or the single lens Equalizer One. Extra thick long lasting silicone skirting offers the closest fit, even for those with moustaches.

Ocean Master Equalizer



Warning: When using this type of purge mask, you must have both hands free to equalize ear pressure.



Equalize with just one hand.

PULL TO FIT

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Patented Q-Strap

Included on every Ocean Master Equalizer mask.



AWARD WINNING DESIGN

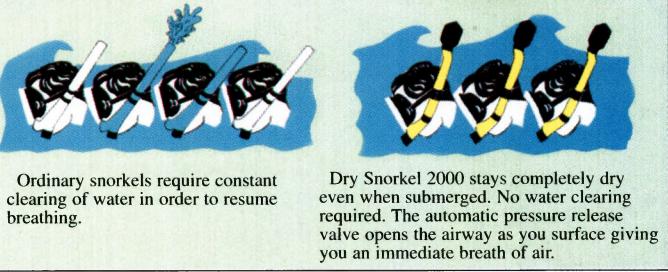


Cylindrical float (blue) and pressure release valve (red) move upward upon water contact, closing the air passage (yellow shaft).

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